

He Says, She Says

Gender Renegotiation in the Satirical Exchanges of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu with James Hammond and Jonathan Swift

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A Thesis Presented to the Department for Literature, Area Studies and European
Languages, University of Oslo

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the MA Degree

Spring Term 2010

Supervisor: Tone Sundt Urstad

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William Hogarth, 'Before' (painted 1730-1731).

Acknowledgements

During the time it has taken me to write this dissertation I have been most grateful for the support and advice I have received from some important people who need to be officially thanked. First and foremost I am indebted to my supervisor Professor Tone Sundt Urstad for her continuous support and guidance throughout the writing process, and especially for arranging for me to stay at Murray Edwards College, Cambridge University.

My two visits to Cambridge were very important to my research. Since I had chosen to write about eighteenth century poetry I needed access to some rather obscure sources which I found in the Cambridge University Library, especially in the Rare Books Room. I am most grateful to the librarians I came into contact with for sharing their expertise with me, and to Dr Jennifer Barnes, President of Murray Edwards College, for providing me with accommodation and allowing me to participate in college life.

At the University Library in Oslo I was fortunate to receive valuable advice and technical assistance from Subject Librarian Annette Møller Madsen when I was faced with challenges during my investigation.

On a more personal note, I am extremely grateful to my parents, Liv and Hans, and my grandmother Ruth, who have helped me both financially and emotionally throughout this process. I should also like to thank my Blindern 'support group', consisting of fellow MA students Karoline, Ida, and Marte, who have always been willing to have a coffee break and listen to the ups and downs of my project. A thank you also goes out to the rest of my friends and family for patiently listening to my concerns and for always taking my mind off them when I needed it.

Finally, it is necessary for me to mention that work on this dissertation has left me with an enormous sense of admiration for Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and other female writers of the eighteenth century, who dared enter the male literary scene and insisted upon a voice of their own.

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1. Introduction

It is necessary to respect, even to conform to public foolishness

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu

In 1733 a poem called 'Advice to a Lady' by George Lyttelton was published. In it the speaker shares what he calls 'the rules of pleasing' (Lyttelton 62. 137) in a bid to improve the charms of his female friend Belinda. Claiming that the only important business in a woman's life is love, the poem states that Belinda ought to wish for 'no power, but that of pleasing [men]' (Lyttelton 59. 80). 'Wit like wine, intoxicates the brain, | Too strong for feeble woman to sustain', therefore, the speaker continues, a wise woman will 'rest content with modest sense' and leave ambition and greatness to men (Lyttelton 57. 33-34, 32). The aim of teaching Belinda how to please is of course for her to attract a suitable husband, but, the speaker warns, 'Think not, the husband gain'd, that all is done': should a married woman act carelessly 'The Lover in the Husband may be lost' (Lyttelton 61. 110, 113). In order to keep a husband interested she should 'Make it [her] pride his Servant to appear' (Lyttelton 61. 121). The advice offered in the poem is understood to be not just a way to secure Belinda a happy marriage. It will also differentiate her from other contemporary women who, according to the speaker, spend their days only thinking about looking pretty, making conquests, and striving to show off their wit. Lyttelton's poem received a written response from one of his female contemporaries: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. She summed up his 137 line long poem thus: 'Be plain in Dress and sober in your Diet; | In short my Dearee, kiss me and be quiet' (Montagu 1993: 264). A true celebrity of her time and as much renowned for her wit as for her beauty, Montagu must have been the epitome of the kind of woman Lyttelton advised Belinda not to become.

Like this reaction to 'Advice to a Lady', Montagu often resorted to what Isabel Grundy calls 'her favourite reactive mode', which was answering poems by men using her own voice as a female poet (Grundy 1999: 308). In this thesis I will be dealing with two such poetic exchanges between Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and male writers, specifically James Hammond's 'An Elegy to an Young Lady in the Manner of Ovid' with her 'An Answer to the Foregoing Elegy', published together in 1733, and 'The Lady's Dressing Room' from 1732

by Jonathan Swift and Montagu's reaction called 'The Reasons that Induced Dr S[wift] to Write a Poem call'd A Lady's Dressing Room', which was published two years later.¹ The reason why I chose not to include her exchange with Lord Lyttelton in the following discussion is simply the shortness of her reply. Readers might also find it strange that I have chosen not to deal with any texts from her famous poetic feud with Alexander Pope. The reason for this exclusion is that even though her written attacks on Pope offer many interesting observations on Montagu as a reactive writer, they were written as a result of Pope provoking her specifically. What I find interesting about her answers to Hammond and Swift is that they were not written as a personal defence, the received opinion being that the male authors did not write their poems with her in mind. Instead she decided to respond to their writing without having received any personal provocation. This makes it especially intriguing to investigate what it was in the poems that made her react.

In this thesis I will argue that by reading the four poems as two sets of companion pieces they give the reader a unique look into gender discourse in the eighteenth century. In addition, I explore the idea that Montagu not only writes from the position of a socially ascribed gender role, the role of an upper class woman, but that she is to some extent aware of it being a role that has to be played and that this awareness is evident in her satirical answers. Her role being that of an *upper class* woman must be emphasised because as such she faced somewhat different norms and challenges than that of middle- and lower class women. By stating that she is conscious of the role I am not claiming that she refuses to play it or that she accepts it completely. What I find interesting, and what is going to be one of my main points, is that she to a certain extent acknowledges the necessity of such social norms and regulations

¹ The main poems will be quoted with line numbers only in the parenthesis. The versions used in this thesis are:

Hammond, James. 1733. 'An Elegy to a Young Lady in the Manner of Ovid with an Answer by a Lady, Author of the Verses to the Imitator of Horace' (London: Printed for J. Roberts, near Oxford-Arms in Warwick-Lane)

Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley. 1993. 'An Answer to the Foregoing Elegy', *Essays and Poems and Simplicity, A Comedy*, ed. by Robert Halsband and Isobel Grundy (Oxford: Clarendon Press) 270-272

Swift, Jonathan. 2006. 'The Lady's Dressing Room', *The Norton Anthology: English Literature* Vol. I, gen. ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York and London: W. W. Norton) 2590-2593

Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley. 1993. 'The Reasons that Induced Dr S[wift] to Write a Poem Call'd A Lady's Dressing Room', *Essays and Poems and Simplicity, a Comedy*, ed. by Robert Halsband and Isobel Grundy (Oxford: Clarendon Press) 273-276

but that she never the less subverts them by revealing them as being open for renegotiation and resignification through her writing.

I have chosen to structure my thesis into four chapters, working on the two sets of companion pieces in two separate chapters. In this first introductory chapter I have decided to include a longer discussion of Montagu's life and literary career, with special reference to her activities as a feminist and satirist, since Montagu is particularly known for having violated 'gender decorum' in several aspects of her life (Keith 80). The reception of an author's work is very often fused with a perception of the person who wrote it, therefore I find it necessary to clarify some of the gender issues she herself faced and commented on before continuing on with the analysis of gender perceptions and performativity in her writing. It is also in this chapter that I will introduce my main theoretical background, which consists of Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity and the eighteenth century literary and social studies of Ellen Pollak and Felicity Nussbaum. My methodological approach and the scope of the thesis will be presented as a separate part at the end of this chapter, where I will discuss my chosen reading method and my understanding of the relationship between a text and its context.

Chapter two is an analysis on James Hammond and his poem 'An Elegy to a Young Lady in the Manner of Ovid', compared and contrasted with Montagu's answer. After presenting a short overview of Hammond's life, literary career, and his poem's connection to Ovid, I go on to focus on the male and female roles in the two poems by discussing how they are portrayed in relation to the gender expectations of their time. Here I will be using Ellen Pollak's 'Myth of Passive Womanhood' in order to demonstrate how Hammond's poem reflects the ambiguous eighteenth century view of women and how Montagu's answer can be seen as a critique of the gender norms he represents. As a consequence of my choice to focus on Montagu's poem as being written as a reaction to Hammond's lack of understanding of female reality, this chapter will also include some observations on Montagu's personal experience and a discussion surrounding her reasons for answering his poem. Summing up the chapter is an analysis of the gender performativity found through a comparative reading of the two poems.

Chapter three is dedicated to 'The Lady's Dressing-Room' by Jonathan Swift and the answer it received which has been identified as belonging to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. In this chapter I will be focusing more on the satirical tradition of the eighteenth century,

including the satires written against women as described by Felicity Nussbaum. As in the previous chapter on Hammond, I will present a short introduction of Swift's life and literary career to establish the historical background for my reading of the two poems. In my interpretation of Swift's poem I will be focusing on his portrayal of the male and female characters and the role played by the poem's speaker. In addition, I will be exploring the critique found in his poem of the gap between conventional eighteenth century art and reality. My analysis of Montagu's answer will also include observations on her male and female characters and their subversive role with regard to eighteenth century society. It will also be relevant to discuss some of the personal reasons Montagu could have had for writing her answer. The final part of chapter three deals with how both Swift and Montagu can be found to defy social taboos based on the theory of gender performativity. The end of this thesis will consist of a short conclusion.

1.1 The Lady and Her Poetry

The Honourable Mary Pierrepont, the future Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, was born into a family of rank, wealth, and power in April or May 1689 (Grundy 1999: 5). Growing up as part of the highest nobility in eighteenth century England, she was given some freedom denied to women of lower rank, such as not having to work and a greater self-confidence. Nevertheless, she could not escape her share of the gender norms and expectations that faced every woman at the time. Forced to obtain an education without any tuition due to the lack of higher education available for girls, she learned several languages, including the 'masculine' language of Latin, and developed an intimate knowledge of the field of literature. At the age of 23 she eloped and married against her father's wishes Edward Wortley Montagu, a man she apparently did not love but respected and from whom she later in life, after their two children were grown, would separate. After the estrangement from her husband she followed a much younger lover abroad and lived in self-imposed exile for twenty years, during which she was accountable to no one but herself which was 'almost unimaginable for most women of her period' (Grundy 1999: xvii). Both in her personal life and in her life as a poet, Montagu was no stranger to scandal. The two most famous of her literary controversies are her public support of the new practice of inoculation against smallpox, a practice she herself helped introduce, and her heated public quarrel with the poet Alexander Pope. After having led what must be seen as an unusually adventurous life, Montagu died of cancer in 1762.

Her ambition as a writer became visible already when she was a young girl, but this literary interest would not be without its obstacles. There were several factors in eighteenth century society that made it challenging to any aspiring female poet to go public with her literary productions. Women belonged to the privacy of the domestic sphere and the conservative ideology that governed the 'notions of femininity' only grew increasingly restrictive throughout the century (Kairoff 157). The public marketplace one would have to enter if wanting to publish one's literary productions was not considered a suitable place for a woman. In addition to this, 'literary productiveness' and 'sexual looseness' were linked in the public's mind, with special resonance for women writers (Brant x). This made it even less desirable for women to become published authors. Montagu's privileged position as an aristocrat and later as an expatriate must have contributed to some extent to her obvious boldness in a search for independence rare for eighteenth century women (Keith 80). But the fact that she was a lady of the nobility often served more as a hindrance than an advantage as the privileges attached to a high social position in the eighteenth century were mostly reserved for men. Even though she was surrounded by great wealth throughout her life Montagu never actually had financial autonomy, the money always belonging to her father or her husband (Grundy 1999: xvii). In regard to her literary career it is interesting to observe, as Roger Lonsdale does in his article on her in *Eighteenth Century Women Poets: An Oxford Anthology*, that 'the social status which would have enabled her to be one of the most influential women writers of the first half of the century in itself provided the inhibition which rendered such a career impossible' (Lonsdale 56). Because of her elevated social status and recognisable name her writings generated a lot of interest, but it also made it difficult for her to openly pursue literary fame. In reality, Montagu's high birth and the expectations that followed proved to be a great strain on her literary ambitions.

Despite the social obstacles, her literary reputation was so much recognised by her contemporaries that both Addison and Pope at some point sought her advice on their work (see Kairoff 162). It might seem strange today that an evidently respected literary figure would not want to see her writing in print, but, belonging to the nobility, Montagu 'professed an aristocratic disdain for publication and literary reputation' (Lonsdale 55). She, along with many of her contemporaries, both male and female, argued that writing for money could only have a corrupting effect on the art, and avoided even the appearance of it. Still, her rejection of official publication did not stop her from allowing friends to read and copy her literary work. During the Restoration, this culture of privately distributing and collecting literary

manuscripts coexisted with the thriving print culture. Copies of manuscripts would often circulate widely, passing from friend to friend and often acquire annotation along the way (Griffin 2005: 55). A lady ambitious for a literary reputation could allow for such semi-publication of their literary work, as it 'brought the author neither vulgar applause nor money but the admiration of her social peers' and therefore was considered proper (Halsband 1969: 39). This private literary culture made it possible for Montagu to present her writing to a restricted audience. Of course eventually such privately circulated manuscripts would often make their way into print in unauthorized editions. Some poets genuinely tried to avoid seeing their work in print, only writing for their own or their friends' pleasure, others would be more willing to see their work printed but tried to avoid attribution. There could be many reasons for a writer not wanting his or her name attached to a published literary piece, some out of modesty and others out of 'legal apprehension or physical fear' (Hunter 174). The physical fear must have been especially real for men, as duelling, though illegal by law, was still practiced. In fact, William Pulteney's literary attacks on Montagu's associate and friend Lord Hervey actually led to a duel (Walpole volume 17: 275n.). Montagu's high social status made it difficult for her to acknowledge publication of her writing, yet some of her work did find its way into print during her lifetime, though mostly without her approval. Such unauthorized publications include some letters she wrote to her friend Conti from Turkey and a poem wrongly read as an attack on the court. Her authorship of the poem was supposed to be a secret, but quickly became common knowledge. The scandal that followed caused permanent damage to her reputation, but spurred her career as a poet. 'Roxana', as the poem was called, was later retitled 'Monday' as the first of Montagu's six 'eclogues', of which three were published in 1716 under the title *Court Poems* by the literary pirate and 'purveyor of scandal' Edmund Curll (Grundy 1999: 103, 109).

Despite the difficulty created by her class and gender, Montagu produced dozens of manuscript poems during her lifetime. Sadly, a lot of her writing remains lost to this day, partly because of her own conflicting feelings about publishing and partly because of the privately circulated manuscripts. Though it helped her literary reputation at the time, the private literary culture has caused problems later as it often makes it difficult to establish with any certainty who actually wrote what (Keith 84). She maintained an ambivalent attitude towards her own writing throughout her life, constantly changing between actively censoring herself, even burning her own work (see Brant vii), and secretively arranging for her work to be printed. It was she who laid the foundations for the posthumous publication of her letters

written during her husband's period as a British Ambassador to Turkey by handing them over to Rev. Benjamin Snowdon on her last voyage back to London in 1761. Undoubtedly, this act displays a wish for publication (Grundy 1999: 611-612). Besides these 'Embassy Letters', what survives of her oeuvre consists of works of political and social commentary, including her own short-lived periodical called *Nonsense of Common-Sense*, some love-poetry, and a few longer works like her play *Simplicity, a Comedy*.

1.1.1 Montagu as a Feminist

As a young woman, Montagu 'clearly pursued an independent path and shaped her character without feminine models' (Nussbaum 1984: 126). This must have had an impact on her own identification with the female sex. It is generally understood that Montagu started out with a kind of acceptance of her female situation and moved into 'radicalism' as her life went on. Montagu's early eighteenth century society viewed women as potentially dangerous with an 'inclination to sexuality and disobedience' (LeGates 22). This image of the dangerous woman was not only present in the popular imagination but held by the literary elite as well. Thus antifeminist sentiments flourished in both literary circles and in society in general. The lives of élite and middle-class women became gradually more and more governed by 'restrictive ideals of sensibility and domesticity' during Montagu's lifespan (Grundy 1999: xxii). Should a woman dare to go against social expectations she would be faced with severe social repercussions, such as loss of status and even social ostracism. Montagu herself had her share of violent disapproval upon her elopement with Edward Wortley Montagu. Seen in the light of a society that was becoming increasingly confining for women, it is interesting to note that Montagu's feminism seems to have developed as a counter-reaction to what was happening to women and their position in society at the time.

Jennifer Keith points out in her article on Montagu that her 'representation of women's experience in many of her poems revises inherited models and subgenres' (Keith 81). Montagu took literary genres that were originally constructed by men to convey male experience and reworked them by incorporating the perspective of a female speaker or adding female characters. Her initial close friendships with such major poets as Alexander Pope and John Gay, gave her access to a group of writers that included some of the most famous male writers in the eighteenth century. This privileged position as a participant in this male-dominated world offers her readers an exclusive look into a woman's experience in a poetic discourse that has been associated with the 'masculine' world of the Augustans. Her very first

publication, anonymous at the time, made her the first and only woman to contribute to Addison and Steel's prestigious periodical the *Spectator*. Her contribution reads as an answer to an essay by Addison published a month earlier. Addison's essay about a club of rich widows is both patronizing and condescending in tone; Montagu's answer, written as if by the president of the club of widows, satirizes marriage from a woman's point of view and reads as a counter-attack to the previous essay (see Montagu 1993: 69-74). Number six of her short-lived weekly periodical *Nonsense of Common-Sense* must also be mentioned, as it is in its entirety an enlightened defence of womankind. In it Montagu states that women are 'rational sensible Being[s]' and not just beautiful objects (Montagu 1947: 28). Her other literary accomplishments include everything from satires on men and women, lyrical descriptions of the torments of love, and critiques of the double standards placed on women. As her life went on she was increasingly willing to allow friends to read her literary work and make copies. Her active use of this socially accepted way of distributing her literature within her own extensive circle shows a 'desire to propagandize in a cause that would benefit women' (Halsband 1978: 44) but it can also be seen as evidence of her own desire of literary fame.

Though her writing might show feminist tendencies, Montagu was far from blind to what she saw as being the faults of her own sex. Equally sharp in her criticism of both sexes, the foolishness of women was sometimes used as the ammunition in her satiric writing. Her poem 'A Satyr', in which she satirizes different types of wives, has even been described as 'an attack on women' (Montagu 1993: 210). Why would she write the exact same type of satire she would condemn later in life? As the poem was written between 1717 and 1718 it can be identified as being a product of what could be called her early pre-feminist period. It was not until after having been satirized herself for years as a learned lady that she 'insisted on sexual equality' (Nussbaum 1984: 127). Writing in a letter to a friend: 'I dare boldly say that the behaviour of most women does more harm than good' (Montagu 1993: 392-393), she never shied away from placing the responsibility for what she considered to be unbecoming behaviour in women on the male part of society. She has been quoted on several occasions as blaming women's bad reputation, which included such unflattering ideas as women being unintelligent, promiscuous, and silly, on their lack of education. Claiming in the same letter that lack of education in a woman 'stifles the natural wit of some, and increases the foolishness of others', she suggests that men should see women as an intellectual resource instead of forcing them to only spend time on 'nonsense' (Montagu 1993: 393). However, despite her own worldliness and progressive female ideal, Montagu still saw female education

as something that would help women ‘bear subjection and not inspire them to overthrow it’ (Pollak 50). In an earlier letter to her daughter, Montagu offers advice on the subject of her granddaughter’s education, encouraging it only as a way to ‘moderate the passions and learn to be content with a small expence [sic]’. She also warns her granddaughter to conceal whatever learning she attains with ‘as much solitude as she would hide crookedness or lameness’ as ‘[t]he parade of it can only serve to draw on her the envy, and consequently the most inveterate Hatred of all he or she Fools’. Rightly anticipating the obvious argument about her own contradictory example, she continues: ‘You will tell me I have not observ’d this rule my selfe [sic], but you are mistaken; it is only inevitable Accident that has given me any Reputation that way. I have always carefully avoided it, and ever thought it a misfortune’ (Montagu 1967: 22-23). Here it seems that Montagu supports the notion that women, learned or not, still belong to the private sphere of life. Pollak sees what can be conceived as Montagu’s anti-feminist sentiments here and elsewhere as ‘a distinct record of the profound conflict and suffering created by the pressures [social] norms imposed’ (Pollak 69). This is a great reminder that a writer, no matter how much he or she might try to avoid it, is unavoidably a product of his or her own time.

In his essay ‘Condemned to Petticoats’, Halsband states that even though the ‘official’ feminist movement came half a century after Montagu’s lifetime, Montagu’s ‘life-long preoccupation with women as women, their privileges and disabilities’, makes her deserving of an ‘honourable place in that movement’ (Halsband 1978: 35). Montagu’s active involvement on the literary scene and her constant written representation of women’s unjust treatment in society has to be acknowledged as a feminist contribution to history. Although she continued to be engaged by feminist topics throughout her life she did not confine herself to just one subject, which is evident by what remains of her large range of literary works. In the end, what could be conceived of as being her ultimate claim to feminism is the way ‘her literary energy and passion drove her to compete in an activity ruled by men’ (Halsband 1978: 44), sometimes even going head to head with some of the most recognized male poets of the time. This cannot be seen as anything short of feminist.

1.1.2 Montagu as a Satirist

Montagu’s literary works showed signs early on of being ‘drawn to the political satire popular among the wits of her youth’ (Kairoff 161). But if the eighteenth century literary scene was a male dominated world, the satirical tradition was perceived to be an even more purely

masculine dominion. The increasing concern surrounding women's role in society inspired both serious discussion and light entertainment, including a huge production of both visual and written satire against women (see McCreery). This satirical view played an important part in the representation of the traditional roles available for women in relation to men, roles such as wives, mothers, mistresses, old maids, and prostitutes. The perception of the woman as dangerous seductress was gradually replaced by an ideal of female purity during this century, but the image of 'the lusty woman' continued as a popular theme in eighteenth century satire (LeGates 27). Women were expected to accept this satirical criticism of their sex in silence and not engage in public refutation of the often brutal literary treatment, as commenting on satire would draw attention to 'one's alleged deviation from approved social behaviour' (McCreery 33). Because of this few women took on the male dominated satirical world of the Augustans; one of them was Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.

Dustin Griffin observes in his book on satire that 'the organization of culture has made it difficult for women to write and publish satire'. The reasons for this, he argues, include women lacking access to a classical education and the world outside the private sphere and that historically they have been trained 'not to develop or display aggressiveness'. The characteristically hostile style of satire might have discouraged women from cultivating it in public (Griffin 1994: 190). A rare example of a woman poet in this era participating in the typically masculine arena of satire, Montagu's satiric style cannot be said to be any less biting than her male associates. Her satires are very often described as being aggressive in style with 'shockingly cynical observations' (Backscheider 2005b: 213). Quoted as saying she was hated for her intellect, Montagu without a doubt experienced more disapproval than respect for her educated and independent mind. But this understanding came late in her life, earlier versions of Montagu show her as less cautious about revealing her talent for writing satire. Her unconforming choices, both in her literary career and in life in general, put her on more than one occasion in the public eye, making her highly visible and open to attack. Isobel Grundy calls her a 'lightning rod for misogynist anxiety and anger' (Grundy 1999: xix). Made to suffer several satirical attacks, none was so damaging as those aimed at her by her former friend Alexander Pope. Her relationship with Pope started out as a close friendship that eventually turned into extreme animosity. In the beginning he would often proclaim his love and adoration for her, but as their relationship deteriorated hurtful lines aimed to damage replaced the previous poetry of praise. That he happened to be the most famous British poet of the eighteenth century only added to the public nature of the quarrel. Pope was 'the centre

of controversy' of the literary scene of that decade (Halsband 1969: 42). The reason for his change of heart is to this day unknown, but Byron, a self professed devotee of Montagu, believed that upon her return from Turkey, Pope 'declared his amorous designs upon her person, and she laughed in his face'. This insult apparently became too much for the famous bard, turning him into her enemy. This version of the story is supported by Montagu's granddaughter, Lady Louisa Stuart (Landry 1998: 309).

Whatever the reason behind Pope's change of heart, Montagu's own reasons for writing were 'not always so altruistic'. Even though she once stated that 'revenge was a pleasure forbidden to women', she indulged herself in that very pleasure more than once (Halsband 1978: 45). Horace Walpole even quoted her in one of his letters as saying: 'People wish their enemies dead – but I do not; I say give them the gout, give them the stone!' (Walpole volume 35: 489). When Pope's attacks on her person commenced, instead of following social convention and enduring his attacks in silence, Montagu engaged in satirical battle. Pope's contemporary Hanbury Williams, discussing Montagu's close friend Lord Hervey's literary attacks on Pope, observed in a letter to his friend Henry Fox: 'Would a prudent man choose to engage Mr. Pope? His English may not be grammar but 'tis intelligible, and his abuse may not be true, but 'tis very lasting' (Urstad 216). To be on the receiving end of the dreaded satirical pen of Alexander Pope was obviously something a 'prudent man' would wish to avoid. One can only imagine what they would say about a woman who purposely provoked the foremost verse satirist of the age using heavy satirical ammunition. But Montagu not only proved that she could defend herself, she attacked Pope with a vengeance. Pope is known for his biting satirical treatment of his victims; what has generated the most controversy is the harshness of Montagu's counter-attacks. Her personal and explicit insults strike some critics even today as 'lower, more personal, and dirtier' than Pope's, violating both 'the standards of decency and literary engagement' (Backscheider 2005a: 94), not to mention expected feminine behaviour. Having once been his confidant, Montagu had enough sensitive information to truly hit Pope where it hurt and she did not shy away from using it. Suffering from Pott's disease from an early age, Pope had developed a severe hunchback. In her 'Verses Address'd to the Imitator of the First Satire of the Second Book of Horace', often thought to be the cruellest contribution to their war, Montagu describes his deformed physical appearance as being created by God to mirror the grossness of his soul (see Montagu 1993: 268. 50-54). This explicit use of Pope's weaknesses, such as his physical deformity, shocked even Montagu's own granddaughter. Although her

aristocratic rank made such satiric impulses in many ways more respectable than Pope's, as it was more outrageous for a commoner to abuse a person of the aristocracy than the other way around, such impulses were 'simultaneously much less acceptable coming from a woman' (Landry 1998: 317). She stands out as a fearsome lampoonist and there is no doubt that the knowledge of the writer's gender further strengthens the shocking quality of her attacks: 'the superficial notion of women as sensitive, delicate creatures perishes under the impact of her coarse and strident couplets' (Halsband 1978: 46).

1.2 Theoretical Background

Judith Butler's theory of performativity is the chosen theoretical basis for this thesis and needs a thorough introduction. This theoretical introduction also includes an explanation of some important theoretical concepts, such as 'the myth of passive womanhood' from *The Poetics of Sex* by Ellen Pollak and the 'satires against women' tradition as described by Felicity Nussbaum (see Nussbaum 1976/1984), as they will be key to my discussion of the texts in question.

1.2.1 Gender Performativity

With her theory of gender performativity, Butler seeks to destabilize gender and sexual norms. By exposing the notion of a fixed gender binary as false, she wants to disrupt the common understanding of the 'natural' in relation to gender. In the introduction of her groundbreaking work *Gender Trouble*, she states:

The view that gender is performative sought to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body. In this way, it showed that what we take to be an "internal" feature of ourselves is one that we anticipate and produce through certain bodily acts, at an extreme, a hallucinatory effect of naturalized gestures (Butler 2007: xv-xvi).

Instead of being determined by biology, she claims that gender is an illusion created by various performative acts of styling the body according to social norms and expectations that comes with the gender that the person is desired to produce. It is these repetitive social performances that form the bases of the illusion that gender is something natural. This social appearance of gender divides the population into female and male identities and regulates what is seen as expected and accepted social behaviour. What gender a person is perceived to belong to by the surrounding society dictates how that person comports herself or himself in public, including how to act, dress, talk, and even move. This gender performativity creates in

effect a hermeneutical circle: gender produces the identity that it is said to represent. But, Butler warns, to reduce performativity to performance '*would be a mistake*'. Gender is not a choice or a role that is decided upon by a subject, as there is no subject prior to the performative acts. As Butler herself puts it: 'There is no subject who is "free" to stand outside these norms [...] on the contrary, the subject is retroactively produced by these norms in their repetition' (Butler 1993: 24, 22, emphasis in the original). In order to achieve the status of subject one has to conform. A subject identified as a 'girl', Butler explains, 'is compelled to "cite" the norm [of femininity] in order to qualify and remain a viable subject'. Should a member be seen as not conforming to his or her cultural expectations, the threats of punishment, such as social ostracism and the revoking of the subject status, will become a reality. 'Femininity is thus not the product of a choice, but the forcible citation of a norm, one whose complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation, punishment' (Butler 1993: 23). The effect of this regulatory regime of compulsory repetition of prior and subjectivating norms is the impression of a stable gender binary system of masculinity and femininity.

Seen in the light of Butler's theory, gender is not something we are or something we do but a 'play *between* psyche and appearance'. It is a cultural and public standard of behaviour shaped by gendered norms and regulations, the gendered self being constricted by taboo, prohibition, and threats of punishment (Butler 1993: 24, 21, emphasis in the original). If gender is manufactured then it follows that an administrative force regulates its production. In the theory of performativity, it is understood to be the surrounding society that works as a set of compulsory frames to 'produce the appearance of [...] a natural sort of being', meaning a being that fits into the binary system of gender. Any being that does not fit within the 'rigid regulatory frame' of this system is labelled as unnatural. This production of gender is 'regulated by various social means' that police the performance and cultural appearance of gender so that it conforms to the existing historical standards (Butler 2007: 45). Seen thus, normative gender functions as an indirect form of social control. However, gender is not directly imposed upon the individual. 'Actors are always already on the stage, [acting] within the terms of the performance', explains Butler, 'the gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives' (Butler 2003: 104-105). One generation of identified subjects follows another.

Furthermore, to the extent that gender can be seen as an assignment, it is ‘an assignment which is never quite carried out according to expectation’. The subjects never manage to completely inhabit the ideal they are ‘compelled to approximate’ (Butler 1993: 22). The unavailability of the gender ideal results in what Butler describes as something ‘each of us is forced to negotiate’ throughout our lives. The norms’ compulsory character does not always make them socially ‘efficacious’, especially as cultural gender norms are grounded in the history and tradition of a given society and that this is constantly developing and changing. Consequently, a new generation does not equal a new understanding of gender but it can involve a fair amount of reinvention as the new players continually experience existing norms as inefficient in relation to their social structure. Thus the expectations that come with a specific gender will develop in correspondence with historical and cultural change. This continuous resignification of the norms becomes evidence of, as well as a function of, their inefficiency (Butler 1993: 26). However, this failure to approximate the norm is ‘not the same as the subversion of the norm’ as exposing something as being inefficient does not automatically lead to its subversion. From Butler’s point of view, subversion is ‘*working the weakness in the norm*’ by ‘inhabiting the practices of its rearticulation’ (Butler 1993: 22, 26, emphasis in the original). In other words, for an action to be truly subversive it has to not only to expose the norms as they are but also take an active part in the dialogue of their resignification.

Originally a social theory, Butler’s writings on gender and performativity have been used theoretically in both social disciplines and in the humanities. I am inclined to agree with Chris Brickell who states in his article ‘Masculinities, Performativity, and Subversion’ that Butler’s theory ‘as it stands’ might prove to be ‘more well-suited to literary analysis than to social theory’ (Brickell 39), as social norms and conventions tend to be easier to recognise after their original period of authority has ended. What Butler proposes to do is to suggest a ‘political genealogy of gender ontologies’ that will deconstruct the appearance of gender into its various acts and also locate those acts within the compulsory frames of the relating society (Butler 2007: 45). I take this to mean that it should be possible for us as readers of historical texts as well as modern ones to locate such performative acts within a text and investigate how the text can be found to support or subvert existing norms and conventions. Social norms of gender are systematically taken as authentic and used to create a system of privilege and oppression and I see part of this authorization as coming from their cultural visibility. One of Butler’s claims in her book is that ‘speech itself is a bodily act with specific linguistic

consequences' (Butler 2007: xxvii). Inspired by Brickell and other literary critics such as Margaret Sönsen Breen, who uses *Gender Trouble* as a 'critical lens' to examine gender and sexual transgression in literature (Breen 2005: 148), I will argue that so is literature. As the written equivalent of the spoken language, literature not only creates consequences but has the ability to sustain its influence long after its speaker has passed away, thus having an even bigger impact on the way we interpret both history and culture. The significance of literature's determinative power is something that should motivate us to continue to go back and re-read texts using modern theories in order to further our understanding of both our cultural and psychological heritage, including our understanding of gender.

Even though the theory of performativity is mainly a queer theory, it is also seen as part of feminist theory (see *Butler Matters: Judith Butler's Impact on Feminist and Queer Studies*, ed. by Margaret Sönsen Breen and Warren J. Blumenfeld). Therefore, I feel it need not be limited to queer texts only, but that it is possible to use it on a wider range of literature, the only requirement being that the text somehow deals with explorations of gender normativity and gender transgression. In the eighteenth century gender norms and regulations were very much understood as originating from nature but also increasingly questioned throughout the period. Margaret Doody writes that until recently 'no literary era has been as conscious of what we call "gender" as the period we call "the Restoration"'. She observes that it is 'impossible to deal with literature of this period without encountering observations upon masculinity and femininity, statements about the male and the female and the androgyne' (Doody 58). Women writers in particular expressed scepticism towards inherited ideas about their sex, often showing a 'complex understanding of female subordination' in their poems as part of a larger cultural discourse surrounding gender's status as natural or ascribed (King: 439). As a woman of the aristocracy, Montagu had a large number of social norms and conventions attached to her female identity. In other words, a lot was expected of her if she was to succeed in her presentation of herself as a woman. Her opposition to some norms and support of others cannot be seen as anything other than an attempt to resignify what she experienced to be inefficient. It is this evident rearticulation of gender in Montagu's poems that makes me interested in reading the poetic exchanges presented here using parts of Butler's theory of gender performativity and her understanding of subversive acts as a dialogue of negotiation.

1.2.2 The Myth of Passive Womanhood and Satire Against Women

In his book on English society in the eighteenth century, Roy Porter writes: 'Whereas men could be themselves, women had to conform to men's expectations of them' (Porter 24). After having conducted the research on the eighteenth century required for the writing of this thesis and combining it with Butler's theory of performativity, I find this statement to be rather naïve. Men as well as women experience social pressure to conform to gender norms, as being identified as a masculine subject involves just as much production and negotiation as its feminine counterpart. However, even though I will touch upon the subject of masculine performance during my discussion, the social performativity of men will not be my primary concern in this thesis, but the female identity and its renegotiation. It was the women in the eighteenth century that, in my opinion, had the worst part of social norms. Not only did they have their physical freedom restricted but also their intellectual freedom, as well as their creativity. Like everything else in social history, the possibilities available to a specific gender also change over time. When it comes to shaping our basic understanding of the views and ideas found in literature, having an analytical view that includes the text's context is particularly important. Here I agree with Ellen Pollak who claims: 'All fictions are mythic to the extent that they are defined by the semiological structures made available by the culture in which they exist'; a writer has no choice but to speak or write this social language (Pollak 6). No fictional text manages to remain untouched by its surroundings, as any given text has to exist within this culture's available structures. Using Butler's understanding of gender as being a socially regulated performance when producing a reading of a text makes it important to not only read the text with modern eyes, but to also see the text within its historical context. In order to focus on the presentation of femininity in a specific text it is vital to comprehend femininity as it was perceived at the time of the production of the text. In this respect I have found both Ellen Pollak's theory of the eighteenth century myth of passive womanhood and Felicity Nussbaum's observations on the satire against women tradition very useful.

Until the last decades of the seventeenth century, the general view of the female sex in English culture was that they lacked any meaningful essence: 'woman' was 'an assemblage of looks, gestures, and physical contrivances; a creature of masquerade and performance' (King: 432). They were dangerous and uncontrollable. But as the century came to an end, an angelic counterpart to the view of women as an active threat to male power in society slowly started to gain a cultural following. The image of the dangerous woman still lingered in the mind of

the English cultural conscience, but women became more and more associated with passivity, frailness, and moral virtue. This came at a time when a shift in the country's economic situation, thanks to a growing middle class, resulted in a 'disruptive re-evaluation of relationships between men and women' (Nussbaum 1976: vii). The culture was changing and, as a consequence, the traditional gender structure was destabilized, questioning what role women were to play in the developing new society. What had been understood to be a given natural order was now under investigation, resulting in an increasing interest in women's character and behaviour.

A new idea based on the reality that fewer women had to work now that the economy was growing presented the female as being by nature the passive counterpart to the active male. This helped form the basis for the increasingly passive role of women in society in the eighteenth century. In her book *The Poetics of Sexual Myth*, Ellen Pollak focuses on this development in the English culture's view of femininity, calling it 'the myth of passive womanhood'. This myth, according to Pollak, emerged during the last decades of the seventeenth century when the 'advocacy of purely passive female virtues' such as 'obedience, modesty, and compassion' was increased by the growing popularity of conduct books written especially for women. Even though the ideal projected on the female sex from the ideas and attitudes contained in such books very often diverged from actual female reality, it nonetheless managed to sustain itself by becoming a 'superstructure ordering society's ways of interpreting that truth and making it intelligible' (Pollak 2, 3-4). In other words, if a woman behaved in a way that contradicted the existing female ideal, society found a way to either explain her away as an abnormality or managed to fit her behaviour into the established norm of female conduct. The many conflicting images of women found in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century society, from virtuous wives to street roaming whores, resulted in a negative ambivalence towards the nature of women. They were presented as being both paragons of virtue and dangerous seductresses. Regardless of whether or not these fictions corresponded with social reality, the structure of this myth became the 'dominant discursive framework for knowing and assessing women's lives' (Pollak 76). Many of these female identities appeared new to the eighteenth century society, but Pollak suggests that this seemingly positive view of women as virtuous was in reality a mere continuance of the 'underlying negative valorization of female sexuality' that had dominated the culture's views on the female sex in previous times (Pollak 6). Still holding on to the idea of woman as dangerous, the only noticeable difference was the presence of an apparently positive female

alternative to the negative standard. However, upon closer inspection this new ideal proves to be but a variant of the old assessment. The so-called positive ideal of female behaviour was only a way to certify the existing myth of woman as dangerous. Instead of providing men with ammunition to help them disarm the dangerous woman, writings on women in the eighteenth century introduced a way to pacify them.

As previously stated, the existing myths about women created by men became 'subject to scrutiny in an unprecedented way' in late seventeenth century England and at the heart of this newfound fascination was the range of female images and female roles visible in society at the time. These contrasting images of feminine identity both intrigued and provoked writers all over the country (Nussbaum 1976: i). The concern surrounding the female sex expressed itself through several different mediums, from the already mentioned conduct books that acquainted women with 'their duties as wives and mothers', to more commercial entertainment such as novels and plays that presented women's transgressions in society with 'a mixture of amusement and horror'. More than anything else it became an increasingly popular topic in satire (McCreery 4). Having investigated this misogynistic trend of satires written against the female sex, Nussbaum explains: 'women were criticized for entertaining insane delusions of power, adopting manly roles, and seeking better education' (Nussbaum 1976: i). The result was a surge of satires written against the female sex. However, this particular use of satire against women was nothing new as it is possible to trace it as far back as to the ninth century BC. This ancient misogynist tradition associates women with animals and insatiable lust with the underlying motivation of differentiating women from men, and to 'define that difference as evil and dangerous' (Nussbaum 1976: i). Male writers involved in this satiric tradition seldom offered advice or hope of reform for their female victims in their poems, but centred their attacks on presenting deplorable images of women that only fuelled the existing negative assumptions about the female sex. The version that emerged during the seventeenth century continued to make use of the old negative female stereotypes, but often presented it in contrast to a positive ideal that served as the exception to the rule. By including this contrasting pair of female characters in their satires, writers were able to not only warn their male readers against the dangerous nature of women, but also to impose an image of an impossible ideal which women should strive to become (Nussbaum 1984: 136). The feminist responses, written by women and male defenders, stressed the already existing 'moral strength and self-sufficiency of the sex' (Nussbaum 1976: vii). The debate that followed was emotional.

1.3 Methodological Approaches and the Scope of the Thesis

The main focus of this thesis, as previously stated, will be the two satirical exchanges connected to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, using Butler's theory of gender performativity and taking into consideration their historical context. By juxtaposition the companion pieces, one written by a man and the other by a woman, I will be able to compare and contrast in order to see the similarities and differences found in their presentation of gender roles. I am interested in seeing if, and if so how, Montagu's involvement contributes to our understanding of the poems written by Hammond and Swift and of the resignification of gender that went on at the time. Such a comparative reading will give me the opportunity of presenting a broader scope of study and thus the ability to draw conclusions that exceed the possibilities of just isolated readings of a text. Because of the spatial limit that accompanies such a thesis as this, it has been necessary to focus my discussion almost completely on the male and female roles as they appear in the four texts. I do this knowing that any reader of the poems will find aspects of the poems to be open for a discussion that goes far beyond the scope of this thesis. This includes doing a wider investigation of the position the 'poisonous couplet' held in eighteenth century literature and the phenomenon of literary exchanges, which would be interesting to a further analysis on the subject.

Observations made in this thesis will be based partly on knowledge of eighteenth century society and partly on modern gender theory. One of the reasons behind my decision to use Butler's gender theory was to make this thesis more than just a historical investigation of eighteenth century gender satire. Literature has always had a great power of influence on how we perceive not only the past but also the present. As John Feather observes: 'Until the growth of radio broadcasting in the 1920s, the printed word had been the unchallenged medium of mass communication for nearly half a millennium' (Feather 406). Consequently, not only is literature often recognized in its own time as mirroring somewhat truthfully the reality surrounding it but it also continues on into the future as a representative of the past. My understanding of writers is that they are unable to exist outside of their contemporary society, thus their texts will always be influenced by the society and culture in which they were written. This of course includes their presentation of gender. When a text presents historically constructed gender criterions, for instance the eighteenth century norm of female virtue as being sanctioned by nature, it adds to the continuous confusion between what is human nature and what is cultural history. When conscious about literature's influence, it is

imperative that we continue to question texts from the past and their relationship to reality. The idea of reading the texts with a focus on gender identity and gender norms is especially intriguing when we take into account that the idea of gender and the gendered expectations of behaviour have changed since the time the texts were written. It becomes a paradox when we see how the writers base their arguments of gender identity as something grounded in biology on unstable reference points such as historically and socially accepted behavioural norms, consequently revealing gender as being a constructed entity. If what they assumed to be the true nature of women in the eighteenth century is exposed as merely socially constructed assumptions open for negotiation, it is only natural to assume that the ideas we cultivate about gender now must also be seen as partly originating from the same paradox. That is why I find it crucial to be aware of certain ideas about gender as being mere continuous historically created illusions.

In a thesis like this a focus on close reading is unavoidable, seeing that small changes in perception can make a big difference in our impression of a poem. I seek to offer an analysis of the following poetical exchanges that is at once textual and ideological in character: textual insofar as my main focus will be on the written texts as verbal structures, and ideological in that I will to some extent rely on the literary texts' social history in my analysis. At the same time it is important that it should not be used reductively, meaning to completely reduce a text to its historical context, as this would limit the text's possibilities of existing outside of its own contemporary discourse. It is my understanding that it is this lasting possibility of interpretation that continues to keep good literature alive long after the culture that created it has ceased to exist. If, as a critic, the only thing one tries to do when producing a reading of a text is to completely merge oneself with the conventions and values of its writer, the only result one achieves is a reduction of what should be an act of expanding a text's limits (Pollak 20). This is why I reserve the right to make some claims in my analysis of the poems that might not be in complete concordance with eighteenth century thought, as I understand the 'meaning' of a text to be to a certain extent open to the interpretation of its readers. The focal point of this thesis will therefore in the end be the text, and not the context.

1.4 The Problem at Hand

Summing up, this thesis purports to use two of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's poetical exchanges with male poets, Hammond and Swift respectively, as the starting point in a discussion about gender performativity and gender perspectives in the eighteenth century, as

it is indicated in the poems. By comparing and contrasting the poems with each other, I want to add to the ongoing discussion on gender performativity by focusing on these texts' representation of gender, with a particular attention towards the presentations of the feminine, and how this can be seen to differ in the poems written by the men and those written by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. I will argue that her conversion of gender norms in her answers is a subversive act, as she, by partaking in a cultural dialogue and claiming a voice of her own, actively inhabits what Butler calls 'the practices of [the gender norms]' rearticulation' (Butler 1993: 26). What aspects of the female stereotype presented in the 'male' poem does Montagu react to, and what aspects does she affirm in her answers, or, in other words, how does she rework the male presentation of gender in her answers? What can this satirical depiction of gender tell us about the performative quality of gender?

My decision to focus on the poems she wrote in direct reply to poems written by male poets is primarily what differentiates my thesis and other studies of Montagu's literary achievements. Many of the critics who have mentioned her satirical exchanges with Swift and Hammond, such as Robert Halsband, Isobel Grundy, and Kathryn R. King, have yet to read the two exchanges together and investigate how her answers oppose the image found in the men's poetry of woman as object, nor have they positioned them in a context of gender negotiation, both of which I intent to do in this thesis. I believe such a reading will be advantageous because not only will it be interesting in relation to the present day discussion on gender and its reality, but it will also be able to give an insight into such diverse subjects as the English satirical tradition, the concept of the author versus the speaker in satire, the myths and conceptions circulating about women in the eighteenth century, those found in satire against women in particular, and the century's social female reality.

2. Montagu's Exchange with Hammond

Judith Butler describes social gender norms as a 'preemptive and violent circumscription of reality', to the extent that they regulate ideals of 'proper and improper masculinity and femininity'. They establish what 'will and will not be considered to be "real"' (Butler 2007: xxiv-xxv). As previously mentioned, the ideal of the virtuous woman was 'not so much a new idea as a new response to an old problem', that of the shrewd, dangerous female sex that in devious fashion might undermine male authority (LeGates 26). But such socially reductive representations of the female sex will unavoidably produce deviants, as most will be found wanting when compared to the ideal. The 'stock [social] deviants' generated by the culturally constructed ideal of passive femininity in the eighteenth century were the women who endeavoured to 'become subjects of desire within an ideological context that objectifies female sexuality as property', this include such stereotypes as the coquette and the prude (Pollak 65). As a punishment for such transgressive behaviour of failing to conform to the existing norms of female sexuality, the deviants became figures of unnaturalness and even presented as non-female. They lost their status as true feminine subjects and became something else. These stereotypes were not only the exceptions that made the rule, as their exclusion functioned as the reaffirmation of the reality of the strict limits caused by the passive female ideal, but they also served as a warning to all women by 'demonstrating the futile narcissism of women seeking the prerogatives of masculinity', that of personal and sexual autonomy (Pollak 69, 3).

For a long time, the values of the myth of passive womanhood with their ambiguous view of women formed the bases of 'the conventional structures of language and thought available for conceiving of and representing women' (Pollak 4). This of course also affected the literature at the time, as a writer is always forced to negotiate within a pre-existing language, or, as Butler describes it: speaking is 'the melancholic reiteration of a language that one never chose' (Butler 1993: 29). In this chapter I am going to focus on the love poem 'An Elegy to a Young Lady, in the manner of Ovid' written in 1733 by James Hammond and the response this elegy received, called 'The Answer to the Foregoing Elegy: By the Author of the Verses to the Imitator of Horace', identified as being written by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. I want to discuss how Hammond's poem can be found to support the traditional ambiguous view of women in the eighteenth century, and how Montagu's answer exposes

these female images presented in Hammond's elegy as being both socially constructed and compulsory for women.

2.1 James Hammond the Poet

James Hammond was born in 1710 as the second son of noble parents. His father, Sir Anthony Hammond, was an MP who practised writing on the side and frequented Pope and other leading poets of the age. This creative environment would have a lasting influence on James. As a second son, James could not expect to inherit much from his spendthrift father's diminished estate due to property laws that normally named the oldest son the primary heir. Not cut out for financial management and with no inclination to continue on with his education at university level, James decided he wanted to become a writer as he found the life of an author 'perfectly suited to his temperament' (Lee 8). After receiving an inheritance from an uncle and some payments from the government for his diplomatic work with his close friend Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, Hammond could afford to set himself up as a gentleman with the financial freedom to write. Lord Chesterfield was the one responsible for introducing Hammond into the opposition circle centred upon the prince of Wales. He also made him acquainted with George Lyttelton, William Pitt, and 'other members of that set' (Sedgwick 103). In 1733 Hammond became equerry to the prince and received a salary of £300 p.a. to his death (Sambrook 2004). Still he could not claim to be rich, at least not according to the standards of what was considered wealthy at his time, but it gave him the possibility to concentrate on his writing without having to work.

In the early 1730s he was introduced to Lady Katherine Dashwood who was to be 'indirectly responsible for James's lasting legacy as a poet'. Hammond was instantly besotted and began his courting immediately. Unfortunately, the young lady's guardian did not find him wealthy enough for his young ward and made Katherine, commonly called Kitty, stop seeing him at once. Andy Lee describes Hammond's reaction thus: 'James refused to take no for an answer, but [was] not quite dashing enough to do anything about it' (Lee 9). Left inconsolable by her rejection, Hammond withdrew from society and started writing, using Kitty as his muse. Referring to her by the classical name of 'Delia' to avoid public embarrassment, she was to continue as the object of most of his subsequent poetry. Even though Hammond did not care much for politics, he did have a brief political career as opposition Whig MP for the rotten borough of Truro from 1741 until his death a year later. This made him part of the successful opposition to Sir Robert Walpole's government that

eventually led to his (Walpole's) resignation early in 1742 (Sambrook 2004; Lee 37-38). But on the 7th of June 1742 James Hammond died unexpectedly. The popular conception of his literary friends was that he had died of a broken heart, and many seem to have truly believed that to be the case (Lee 41). Allegedly, right up until his dying day, he never gave up hope of persuading Kitty's guardian to let her marry him. It is not known whether or not Kitty felt the same way about Hammond. She never did marry anyone else.

Compared to the work of other poets of the age, Hammond's poems have been called 'less refined' but he seems to have been very popular with the reading public as well as among his fellow writers (Lee 32). Apparently never aiming for publication during his lifetime, Hammond's collected works were published posthumously by Lord Chesterfield. The book became a commercial success and was reprinted in at least seven editions from 1743 to 1812 (Lee 46). His poems were also regularly included in most standard collections of English poetry to the early nineteenth century (Sambrook 2004). Usually elegiac in style, which was a very popular trend with both poets and the reading public at the time, the poems often include pastoral references to the English countryside. Like all his associates at the time, Hammond relied on references to classical mythology in his writings. Using a classical context as a backdrop, he concentrated on contemporary views of love and marriage. In concordance with the tradition of using the elegy to write about death, Hammond wrote his elegies in mourning for the death of his love affair, and 'An Elegy to A Young Lady' is no exception to this; it tells the story of love 'nearly gained and completely lost' (Lee 11). The speaker in the poem is a rejected man, addressing the lady who has refused him. Not being able to forget her, he relates how the rejection has affected him and proposes in the end a resolution to his problems by reinventing himself as her advising friend.

2.2 Hammond and Ovid

During the reign of Augustus, Roman Emperor from 27 BC to AD 14, a new style of poetry was emerging that was more public and rhetorical in its style, often written in a satirical tone. In the eighteenth century, especially during the first part of the century, Augustan literature had a renaissance. The idea of eighteenth century Augustan poetry was that a poem claiming 'modern' excellence had to be 'worthy to be set against the summit of the [Augustan] Roman culture', which was considered the unquestioned norm of excellence. This was based on the idea of the gentleman's education and the knowledge this implied of certain ancient writers (Ross xi, xiv). An eighteenth century Augustan poet was often eager to show off his or her

classical knowledge, as this was a mark of having received a higher education of quality. Everyone from Pope to Montagu herself has been known to borrow from the old masters in their poetry, and Hammond clearly links his elegy to one of the classical poets of ancient Rome in particular by including the name Ovid in the title: 'An Elegy to a Young Lady, In the Manner of Ovid'. When reading eighteenth century Augustan poetry it is important to remember its starting point, which is an implied 'consciousness' of both the writer and his readers of the close relationship such poetry has with the poetry of the ancient past of Greece and Rome. The consequence of this relationship is that eighteenth century literature is often based on allusion, making it dependent on the individual reader's classical knowledge and understanding. The eighteenth century Augustan writer often began his writing process with 'the conception of his poem as a finished thing of a certain shape' dependent on the chosen form of the poem. Each of the classic poetic forms, such as the epistle, the elegy, the ode or the epitaphs, had 'notionally appropriate subject matter and diction'. The form should control both the writing and the reading of a poem, so the reader was supposed to share this notion about the poem from the start (Ross xvi, xvii). The fact that Hammond so clearly states that his elegy was written in the style of the classical poet indicates that in order to fully understand Hammond's poem a reader must also have a basic knowledge of Ovid's poetic style. It becomes even more important when aware of the fact that Montagu herself has been described as being '[e]xceptionally at home with the Horatian and Ovidian forms' (Backscheider 2005a: 84), a knowledge that could have prompted her to answer Hammond's elegy.

The poet Publius Ovidius Naso, or Ovid, was one of the leading figures in Roman society and one of the most successful poets during the Augustan reign. Known for his 'polished and lucid verse' and 'delicacy of description', he, alongside his fellow Romans Horace, Virgil, and Juvenal, was seen as one of the great poetic inspirations in the eighteenth century (Radice 180). Ovid can be seen to have had a 'special appeal' for the Augustan poets of the eighteenth century, as he was 'more translated in their style than any time since'. 'As long as Latin verse writing was part of a gentleman's education', Betty Radice observes in her book *Who's Who in the Ancient World*, 'Ovid was the obvious model' (Radice 182). During the first part of his career, Ovid's poetry was almost 'exclusively concerned with love', presenting love as a separate 'field of study and research' in his works (Armstrong 2; Bunson 305). He explored the 'amatory adventures' of a lover-persona in his *Amores* and offered up erotic instructions by acting as instructor in such works as the notorious *Ars Amatoria* (Art of

Love), in which he teaches men and women how to seduce a partner, and *Remedia Amoris* (Cures for Love), on how to remove oneself from an unhappy relationship (Armstrong 2). As a poet, Ovid wrote with 'wit, appreciation of beauty, nature and art', integrating his extensive academic learning into the chosen literary form (Bunson 305). He composed mainly in the elegiac style of the Roman tradition, the same style we find in Hammond's elegy. But there are more similarities than simply poetic technique between Hammond's poem and Ovid's love poetry. Especially when we look at the different narrator personas found in Ovid's love elegies.

Traditionally, love elegies are about how powerless a man is in love. The poet-lover persona presents himself as the one being dominated by the cruel woman he is in love with. Though it can happen that the poet-lover receives access to his mistress's bedchamber, most of the time he is banned from her presence and devoted to trying to get back into her good graces, loudly complaining when his attempts fail. Even so, powerless and locked out from her bedchamber, the poet-lover still retains the power of making someone immortal through his poetry. The poet-lover's beloved therefore has a choice between receiving him and being remembered for her beauty, or rejecting him and being portrayed as faithless and shallow throughout eternity. The reader is ultimately reminded that it is the poet who is in control of his own love story: the readers 'know only the details he chooses to tell us and the version of events he opts to represent' (Armstrong 6). The only proof we have that it is a true representation of the situation and the woman involved are the words of the poet himself. The tragedy of Ovid's poet-lover persona echoes in the first half of Hammond's elegy. Hammond's speaker, though presumably never having been allowed into his beloved's bedchamber, still laments the feeling of being kept apart from the woman he loves by his loss of speech in her presence and because of her rejection. The lady is described as being the one holding all the power as the 'Possessor of [his] Breast' (Hammond 1), though it is revealed later on that this power is only illusory. He also describes the lady as being cold. All of this is very much reminiscent of Ovid's lover-poet and how he is revealed to the reader as being the one controlling the reader's perception of the lady in question. In Hammond's poem, as in Ovid's poetry, the speaker is the only one given a voice.

In some sense, love elegy is supposed to work 'both as a mirror of the common experiences of love, and as a guide, even an incentive, for those who have yet to taste love's highs and lows' (Armstrong 19). According to Rebecca Armstrong in her book *Ovid and his*

Love Poetry, Ovid's love elegies like to '*pretend* to be spoken from the heart' but turn out to have a much more 'cerebral' project in the end. They offer a much more cynical version of love than what a reader might expect from traditional love poetry (Armstrong 16, emphasis in the original). Ovid's poet-lover is the man in love that the story centres around, but sometimes it suits the speaker to appropriate the authority of a traditional didactic poet. This teacher of love is presented into the narrative to give his readers advice on the proper way to behave in a love affair (Armstrong 45). His teacher of love often recommends letting the head rule the heart in matters concerning love. In fact, this speaker argues, there are 'foolproof rules which anyone can follow to find the perfect love affair and evade the unhappy ones' (Armstrong 4). As for Hammond's speaker, when he turns from lover to friend, there is also a shift in the speaker's attitude towards the lady. No longer presenting himself as the scorned lover, now that he is a friend offering a lady advice on how to best handle her love life his tone turns didactic. But like the personae or speakers of Ovid's elegies, Hammond's 'two voices' are somewhat difficult to tell apart. His teacher of love does not completely eradicate the poet-lover, whom the reader senses in the background. What becomes clear in the end of Hammond's poem is that the lover-poet and the teacher of love are in fact exactly the same voice, and that everything was part of a desperate attempt to make her chose him over the other men. Knowing this, one cannot help to feel that Hammond's use of Ovid's elegiac technique of applying different speaker personae was a way of covering up the true aim of the poem: to manipulate the lady. And, as we shall see in her part of this chapter, it seems that Montagu can be understood to have agreed with this reading.

Another thing it might be interesting to know about Ovid's poetry before going on with the analysis of the two poems is his negative attitude towards monogamy. In addition to recommending a certain amount of rational thinking about the business of love, Ovid was also known for asserting 'independence from the constraints of traditional morality' while applauding a 'libertine approach to love' (Armstrong 3). Even though the exact reason for his exile to the island of Tomis by the Emperor Augustus himself has never been disclosed, it has been suggested that this libertine approach to love and the deprecating of marriage found in his poetry had something to do with it (Radice 180; Bunson 305). Montagu, having educated herself in the classical authors, must have known this about the poet. The fact that she questions Hammond's intentions towards the lady might originate from her knowledge of Ovid's support of 'free love'. By choosing to write a love elegy in the same style as a man who was notorious for his negative view of monogamy and then proclaiming this affinity in

his title, Hammond certainly does not inspire trust in his female readers. Whether or not this was what Montagu had in mind when she answered his poem, the clear link between Hammond's love poem and Ovid, with his well-known liberal approach to love, further damages Hammond's claims of honest intentions.

2.3 'An Elegy to a Young Lady'

Hammond's 'An Elegy to a Young Lady', though found to be less intricate than the poems of contemporary poets like Alexander Pope, still contains several interesting statements about gender that are worth closer attention. When aware of the gender expectations of the eighteenth century, what is interesting about this elegy is that the image of both the speaker and the lady change dramatically halfway through the poem. This leaves the reader bewildered as to who in the end turns out to be the victim.

2.3.1 The Disappointed Lover

The elegy opens with the male speaker lamenting his life as an unrequited lover: 'Oh! say, thou dear Possessor of my Breast! | Where is my boasted Liberty and Rest? | Where the gay Moments which I once have known? | Oh, where that Heart I fondly thought my own?' (Hammond 1-4). Having lost his heart to the lady in question without receiving hers in return, he cannot claim the comfort other lovers feel in the arms of their beloved. This rejection has affected him so much that he even scorns 'the Beauties common Eyes adore' (Hammond 7), in other words: he finds himself turning down beautiful women other men would admire because of her. He spends his days planning what to say to her, but when he finally finds himself in the lady's presence he loses the ability to speak: 'My Heart's so full, I wish, but cannot speak' (Hammond 18). Continuing on, the speaker questions whether, if he were able to speak to her, he would overcome his pride and expose to her the truth about his feelings towards her. Calling his love for her 'thy Triumph, and my Shame?', he likens their relationship to a contest that she has won, thus shaming him (Hammond 22). He confesses that he has until now not been 'studious of the Art to please'. Having now fallen in love with her he has to 'Abjure those Maxims [he] so lately priz'd' (Hammond 20, 23). These lines can be interpreted to mean several things depending on what 'Maxims' the reader understands the speaker to have previously lived by. It is possible that he did not pay much attention to women before he met her, preferring a life of study and books, which would explain his earlier statement: 'In vain wou'd Books their formal Succour lend | Their Wit and Wisdom

can't relieve their Friend' (Hammond 11-12). On the other hand, he could have paid women too much attention but never cared much for the individual ladies involved, in other words: he could have preferred a libertine approach to love. With the poem's relationship with Ovid and his advocacy of liberal love fresh in mind, it is this second interpretation that is preferred in this reading of the poem. This understanding also gives a greater meaning to the speaker's next statements. He claims that it feels like a defeat to 'court that Sex [he] foolishly despis'd' (Hammond 24), and states that by making him care for her and then turn out to be unattainable, she 'revenge'd the Wrongs of Womankind' (Hammond 26). She has turned the tables on him and he now finds himself in the position previously held by the seduced and subsequently rejected women. The speaker presents himself as being powerless, claiming that all his eloquence is gone and all he is left with is tears.

Seemingly realizing that he has to give in to the reality of the situation and stop pretending there is a chance for him to become her lover, he proposes a resolution to his problem by presenting himself: 'not as thy Lover, but thy Friend' (Hammond 32). If she were to accept him as her friend he would be able to offer her his advice on love without the apparent danger of his trying to mislead her for selfish reasons. Because of her beauty, he says, the lady is in danger as 'Thousands will fain [her] little Heart ensnare' (Hammond 33). Therefore, he continues, she must choose wisely one who deserves it, as her choice of husband, if it is a worthy one, can determine her own fame. He goes on to advise her not to 'despise, though void of winning Art, | The plain and honest Courtship of the Heart', as the men who seem more skilled in the art of love 'will please and flatter more' but in the end feel less (Hammond 37-38, 40). Men who are learned in what the speaker calls 'that guilty Trade', the practice of seducing women, can deceive a young naïve girl using false tears to convince her of their sincerity and thus 'thaw the Icy Coldness of [her] Breast' (Hammond 41, 46). If she finds herself in this dangerous situation the lady must 'shut [her] Eyes to such deceitful Woe', as they only want her as a conquest because of the 'Beauty of [her] outward Show' (Hammond 48).

Unlike him, the speaker warns, these deceitful men, whose lips are 'so knowing to deceive', 'do not love, what'er they seem' (Hammond 43, 49). Admitting to having feelings of passion for the lady himself, the speaker describes it as a 'Passion founded on Esteem' (Hammond 50). If one is to understand it according to the speaker, his kind of passion is preferable to the passions felt by these other dangerous men. But, even though he now

presents himself as the well-meaning friend, readers may find it difficult to differentiate between the speaker of the poem and the men he is warning the lady about. He admitted to having despised the female sex before he met her and seems almost too knowledgeable when it comes to the false games male seducers play on innocent women to be guiltless himself. In fact, he actually describes how he forms a 'thousand Schemes and Things to say' in order to forge a relationship with the lady (Hammond 16). And even though he claims that he is rendered speechless by her very presence, thus sabotaging all his plans, it seems rather suspicious when a poet insists in a love elegy written to his object of desire that he is incapable of speaking with 'Eloquence and Ease'. For what could be more eloquent or more persuasive than a love poem, or for that matter: who could have a more 'skilful Tongue in Love's persuasive Lore' than a poet (Hammond 19, 39)? Further more, by the time the speaker warns the lady of the insincere men who's 'Tears in false Submission dress'd | Might thaw the icy Coldness of thy Breast' (Hammond 45-46), he has already asserted that all his eloquence shall be his tears. Obviously, his own schemes have a lot in common with those of the men the lady should be aware of. All this continues to underline the previously stated interpretation of the speaker as having a libertine reputation.

After all this, one cannot help but ask oneself if the speaker truly deserves both her and his readers' trust. In the end, the poem seems not only a warning against other men but against the speaker himself, who has turned out, despite his attempts to portray himself as a better choice, to be not much different from them. Having removed himself from the victimized image first introduced in the poem, he has involuntarily become yet another man the lady should be aware of: a selfish man who is trying desperately to get his way with a woman by trying to manipulating her using any means possible. Whether trying to inspire guilt in her to pull her into submission through his rejected-lover persona or urge her in his direction through being her didactic friend, he is using his eloquence to set himself up as the one to choose above the rest. When he demonstrates his ability to remove himself from the fragile position of a lover and re-invent himself as the male adviser he makes it clear that he is in reality the powerful one in this relationship. Making it seem like it was she who held the power over him was simply a way of trying to manipulate her. One ends up questioning whether or not his propaganda campaign is truly inspired by love. What he feels towards the lady might not be his usual indifference towards the female sex, but this sudden interest in the woman who turned him down may simply be a result of exactly that: her rejecting him. By rejecting him she becomes something the self-proclaimed 'obdurate' man cannot have. One

thing is for sure; he does not seem to feel passion for the lady because of any of her specific attributes apart from her outer beauty, as the narrator mentions none.

2.3.2 The Dangerous Lady

Even though Hammond's elegy claims to be 'to a Lady' the poem is remarkably lacking in descriptions of the lady in question. Except for a couple of lines, the elegy deals mostly with the narrator's own lament over his rejected love, and not so much about the lady herself. The few lines that do describe the lady only uphold the ambivalent image of the woman present in eighteenth century culture. This includes one of the 'striking features of representations of women in eighteenth century poetry', which is their insistently scheming nature (King: 434). The elegy is written in the first person singular, as if the speaker is addressing the lady in person. This mode of writing gives the narrator the opportunity to not only sound confessional but also to accuse the lady directly of what he suspects to be foul play on her part and thus portray her as the epitome of a scheming woman. She herself is not given the opportunity to answer back, as the voice in the poem strictly belongs to the male lover. Exclaiming 'Own thou has soften'd my obdurate Mind, | And thou reveng'd the Wrongs of Womankind' (Hammond 25-26), the speaker wants her to admit to having deliberately made him love her, giving her the opportunity to reject him and thus revenge all of womankind. If this was the case then his words and his pain were all in vain: she never intended to receive him as a lover, she only used him as part of a scheme. It is interesting how a single woman's rejection becomes the revenge of the whole of womankind. This idea of one woman's actions being representative of the nature of women in general can be seen as an example of the idea at the time that gave the men almost the exclusive right to be seen as individuals. As Roy Porter says in his book on eighteenth century society:

Public opinion (largely male but echoed by conformist women) tight-laced women into constrictive roles: wives, mothers, housekeepers, subordinate workers, domestic servants, maiden aunts. Few escaped. Such stereotyping created a kind of invisibility: women were to be men's shadows (Porter 22).

Women were stereotypes, seen only as representatives of the female role they had been given by male society. Outside of that role they were invisible; mere 'shadows'.

The speaker also claims the lady is cold, as the false tears of the seducers 'Might thaw the icy Coldness of [her] Breast' (Hammond 46). The image of a cold and scheming woman evokes the eighteenth century female stereotype of the prude: a woman using her chastity as

an excuse to reject the advances of all men. But as Pollak explains: the prude ‘exploits the appearances of chastity in order to avoid true purity, and is criticized for being not really cold but prurient’ (Pollak 67). ‘True purity’ for women meant eventually getting married, as marriage was understood by many people to be the natural extension of female purity and virtue. The reality of the prude criticism was not that she was too virtuous, but the opposite: because she denied men access to her sexuality through rejecting marriage she was seen as using it deliberately to satisfy her own personal desire for power over men. Such sexually aggressive behaviour from a woman was punished by society by ‘masculinising’ her, or revoking her social value as a woman (Pollak 67). The dangerous female sexuality could only be regulated within the boundaries of matrimony. In the words of George Lyttelton: ‘The honour of the prude is rage and storm | ’Tis ugliness in its most frightful form, | Fiercly [sic] it stands, defying God and men, | As fiery monsters guard a giant’s den’ (Lyttelton 58. 47-50). Though Hammond’s speaker describes his lady as both scheming and cold he does not ‘masculinize’ the lady completely as she is still young and marriageable. Instead he advises her to enter into marriage as the way to continue her virtuous behaviour. It was by accepting conjugal love, not by rejecting it, that a woman could keep her status as both pure and feminine in the eyes of her society.

That gender reality is created through imposing regulatory norms on a society’s members means that ‘the very notions of an essential sex and a true abiding masculinity or femininity are also constructed as part of the strategy that conceals gender’s performative character’ (Butler 2007: 192). These cultural gender norms make sure that any possibility of existing outside of the restricting frames is made to seem undesirable or even impossible. During the eighteenth century, as opportunities for single women to maintain themselves decreased, old maids were increasingly seen as an ‘economic burden within the household of their parents, their brothers or their brothers’ families, their friends, or, where no such help was available, a burden on the parish’ (Hill 124). A woman’s duty was seen as being a good wife and a mother; if she did not fulfil these normative roles she was seen as a liability. The spinster became an unnatural woman. In the words of William Hayley from his *A Philosophical, Historical, and Moral Essay on Old Maids* from 1786:

How utterly devoid of tenderness and of every amiable sensation, must that female be, who never felt at any period of life, a desire to engage in the duties or to share the delights of that state, to which all human beings are invited to by the voice of nature

and reason [...] she will slip out of the world without answering the end of her creation! (quoted in Hill 129-130)

So deeply was this understanding of female existence rooted in the cultural consciousness that the very idea of a woman wanting a life without a husband was seen as almost biologically impossible. Being a man's mate was presented as a woman's reason for living. Even Montagu, in her young age, expressed anxiety over becoming an old maid, as she stated in a letter to her friend Philippa Mundy in 1711: 'I have a Mortal Aversion to be an Old Maid' (Montagu 1965: 112). This fear of becoming the dreaded spinster, thus having to endure all the social scorn that position brought with it, ensured that 'however bad a marriage might be it was regarded as infinitely preferable to remaining single' (Hill 124). To be married was presented as the pinnacle of female existence.

After having proposed his friendship to the young lady as a substitute for his original offer of love, the poem's speaker goes on to advise her on her love life and how she must watch out for the thousands of men that will try to ensnare her 'little Heart' (Hammond 33). By calling her heart little he invokes an image of a small child or something undeveloped and in need of protection. He might also be referring to her ability to love as being less than what a 'normal' sized (meaning a man's) heart could produce, this image being more in correspondence with the image of a heartless and vindictive woman that plays with men's emotions. Even so, it seems that the speaker, who before acted like the accusatory lover, now is actually warning the lady of being in danger simply for being beautiful. The way of saving herself is to 'wisely chuse who best deserves thy Flame | So shall the Choice itself become thy Fame' (Hammond 35 - 36). This choice of what is most likely her future husband seems to be, according to the male speaker, her only realistic possibility of becoming famous through respectable means. A married woman's reputation at the time was inextricably tied to that of her husband; 'the domesticated, bourgeois housewife' was 'a bauble and brainless symbol of her husband's material success' (Merill 93). In polite society, a lady's reputation after marriage was just as crucial as her reputation before. If the lady's choice of husband is good then her reputation will also remain good. However, even though many parents might have subscribed to the idea of a daughter's consent to a marriage, financial considerations often outweighed such principles. At the beginning of the century it was still 'common among the Quality for a father to arrange his daughter's marriage: she would at best have a veto over his choice' (Porter 24). So ironically, the young lady in Hammond's elegy would probably not have had any real power over her own marital matters in reality.

According to Hammond's speaker, it is men that represent the danger in which all good-looking ladies find themselves. Not all men in general but those who are not interested in marriage and only see beautiful women as something to conquer and discard without any regard for what it might do to the women. These men will come after her, warns the speaker, in order to try and trick her: 'For, without Danger, none like thee are fair' (Hammond 34). Her gender mixed with her beauty makes her automatically a possible victim. That the lady might be already warned of such dangers, which would be highly likely since a lady's virtue was of great importance to her marital value in the eyes of her society, or even that she is capable of identifying such rakes for herself does not even occur to the male speaker. In his eyes she is in need of his guidance and protection. 'Without men', declared Addison and Steel, 'women would not be amiable' (quoted in LeGates 38-39). Hammond's speaker explains that men trained in the art of seduction can 'long abuse a fond, unthinking Maid' (Hammond 42), obviously seeing the lady as being both defenceless and mindless. The speaker continues to characterize the young lady as being an 'unexperienc'd Youth' who will easily believe the false tears of the seducers (Hammond 44). This image of an easily fooled and naïve young woman certainly is a contrast to the previously devious lady who set a trap for a man in love in order to revenge all of womankind. It is indeed an ambiguous image he is painting of the young lady.

In the end, what starts out as a cold and scheming lady with power to take revenge on behalf of her entire sex ends up embodying the ideal of the virtuous female in need of male protection. It is this turn of perspective that makes this poem a perfect example of the ambivalent view of women found in the eighteenth century and how the female role was governed by strict cultural norms. There was a power struggle between men and women during the Restoration and sexuality was 'explored in its connection with power constructs and power relations', resulting in 'very conscious gendered imagery' (Doody 68). The lady is pictured from the start as being the one with the power to hurt. By controlling her own sexuality she is able to reject men, but the narrator eventually discloses how powerless that rejection actually is when exposed to the male authority in society. Her original power of independence is revealed to be temporary or even illusory. The reality is that a lady had no choice; she would eventually have to give in to a man and enter into marriage if she was to continue to be respectable in the eyes of her contemporaries. A woman's virtue had to eventually be subordinate to male authority (LeGates 30). The speaker of Hammond's poem

knows this and uses it to his advantage by pointing it out and presenting himself as the best option for his female object of desire if she intends to fulfil society's expectations of her.

2.4 Montagu on Courtship and Marriage

One of the most popular public debates at the time, occupying everyone from poets to politicians,² was on the issue of marriage and whether it should be entered into primarily for love or finance. Montagu, as it is understood by several of her poems and essays, believed in the possibility of marriage bringing great happiness to both man and woman if entered into by two intelligent and sensible people in love. Such a union, she stated in a long French essay, would bring 'far greater happiness [to both parties] than any alternative' (Halsband 1978: 43). But in the eighteenth century this was more easily said than done. Because of a development in politics during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, political power depended less upon royal favour, as it had done in previous times, and much more upon landed wealth (Pollak 31-32). Land was the most important source of wealth in the eighteenth century, giving its owners a 'significant role in politics, government and society' (Black 392). Such was the economic, social and political power of land that owners were always looking for ways to extend their properties. A carefully arranged marriage between two landed families was one way to add to a family's wealth and political power. Material interests had always played an important part in upper-class marital matters in England but this new development in politics, linking the ownership of land more directly to political power, increased the pressure on marriages to be financially rewarding. So when a father was 'casting around for a husband for his daughter in the early Georgian marriage market,' love was seldom his first consideration. A matrimony made in the eighteenth century was not narrowly about a couple's love for each other but 'involved wider matters of family policy, securing honour, lineage and fortune' (Porter 26). Unfortunately, many of these 'mercenary marriages' did not in the end result in happiness.

According to Isobel Grundy, eighteenth century society 'fostered hypocrisy'. She explains: 'Marriages were made by parents on financial grounds; remnants lingered of a libertine code (chiefly for males); the pursuit of pleasure was the business of the rich; yet the moral imperatives of Christian marriage were officially unchallenged' (Grundy 1999: 230).

² See, for instance, the Hardwicke Marriage act of 1754 and its concern for clandestine marriages.

At the same time as the institution of matrimony was becoming more of an economic affair than it previously had been, most public discourse supported such ideals as family honour and female purity. It became more and more socially expected that a woman, in addition to bringing status to her family by marrying whomever they found to be suitable, should also find her spiritual fulfilment in her marriage (Pollak 69). This meant in other words not only that women's marriages were often arranged for them on purely financial grounds, but that the same society that condoned these economic unions also expected the women to find happiness and fulfilment in their role as wife to a man they themselves had not chosen. Such high and to some extent unrealistic expectations were bound to lead to even more failures than happy endings. This included Montagu's own, which she originally entered into against her father's wishes. This was, however, a marriage most likely entered into not out of love but out of a wish to avoid marrying the man chosen for her by her father (Grundy 1999: xvii). Originally content with her marital choice, Montagu ended up estranged from her husband and in exile abroad. She did not return to England until her husband had passed away in 1761.

Several of Montagu's best known feminist poems not only assert the worth of women but clearly criticize women's unequal status both in marriage matters and in society in general. In 'Epistle from Mrs. Y[onge] to her Husband', for example, she identifies the double standard that existed in society with regard to adultery: acceptable for the husband, punishable for the wife (Montagu 1993: 230). The importance of female chastity was indeed another thing that was intensified by the changing political environment. Due to the amount of political power that came with landed property, landowners were more likely to entail all their property on a single male heir. The anxiety created by the prospects of possible bastardy in the family line made the ideal of virtue even more important in a woman than it had been before. A husband would not wish to bequeath all of his property to a son unless he was sure of his paternity. The outcome was that 'the burden of social responsibility for conjugal fidelity' was shifted 'more exclusively onto women than had been the case before' (Pollak 54). The adultery of men was not exactly encouraged but society usually turned a blind eye. In the words of Dr Johnson: 'Wise married women don't trouble themselves about infidelity in their husbands [...] The man imposes no bastards upon his wife' (quoted in Porter 25). The adultery of women on the other hand was treated with the utmost contempt and became even punishable by law as a wife's adultery was reason enough to get a divorce. In contrast, a husband's adultery was not.

In addition to Montagu's concern for the status of married women, she also defended women on issues of love and sex outside of marriage. She especially criticized the popular notion of women being evil seductresses of innocent men. When it came to matters of seduction, according to Montagu, the woman was the real victim. Women were the ones who risked having to give birth to an illegitimate baby, which, if it was made public, lead to social ostracism. Montagu saw women as the only ones bound by vows and restrained by the possibility of social shame, men, on the other hand, experienced no such responsibility. Because of this double standard, the woman was the one who had to endure the punishment while the perpetrator, the man, was unjustly rewarded the opportunity to walk away socially unharmed. In her poem 'An Answer to a Love Letter in Verse' she makes her feelings on this particular matter quite clear: 'While moves unpunish'd Destroyer Man. | Not bound by vows, and unrestrain'd by Shame, | In sport you break the Heart, and rend the Fame' (Montagu 1993: 245. 14-16). It is quite possibly this moral anger expressed on behalf of the wounded woman that makes Grundy describe her voice as being more 'anti-masculinist than those of most of her contemporaries' (Grundy 2006: 190). This critical quality is apparent in several of Montague's poems about women, including her answer to the young James Hammond's love elegy.

2.5 'The Answer to the Foregoing Elegy'

Montagu's answer to Hammond's love elegy was first published anonymously in a folio together with his poem in 1733. This was the third folio published during her lifetime that has later been attributed to Montagu, the other two being her answer to Swift called 'The Dean's Provocation for Writing the Lady's Dressing-Room. A Poem' and 'Verses address'd to the Imitator of the First Satire of the Second Book of Horace by a Lady', her most severe attack on Pope. In reality, her authorship of 'The Answer' must have been public knowledge already at the time of its release, as the printer, with or without her consent, made her authorial identity pretty clear by including 'By a Lady, Author of the Verse to the Imitator of Horace' on the folio's title page. The commercial power of authorial identity grew substantially between the 1660s and the 1740s, making the currency of poets' names and reputations 'crucial to the book trade'. Sometimes, simply identifying an author indirectly by reference to previous work would be enough to secure a success (Hunter 172-173). By this time her public quarrel with Pope was already notorious and the printer was most likely hoping to profit by linking the folio to the feud (Halsband 1978: 42).

Because of the nature of the eighteenth century book trade it can be somewhat dangerous to take two poems that were published together as being originally linked to one another. As previously mentioned, a well known author's name was increasingly seen as having a certain market value and by publishing two such authors together, as if in a feud, must have further increased the prospects of a financial profit. Apart from the obvious affinities in themes and sentiments expressed in the two poems, the choice of reading the two poems as 'counter poems' in this thesis also rests on the judgement of several other critics, including the two most famous Montagu experts Isobel Grundy and Robert Halsband, that have treated her poem as being a direct answer to Hammond's poem (see Grundy 1999: 308; Halsband 1978: 42). However, how she obtained Hammond's poem in the first place, as it must have been a fairly recent production when the folio was released, is not known. It is not impossible that the love poem came to Montagu's attention through her connections at court, seeing that Katherine Dashwood, Hammond's lost love, was one of the young women frequenting the court and later a friend of Montagu's daughter (Grundy 1999: 308n). She was said to have declined his proposal of marriage 'on *prudential* reasons', and had been very likely criticised by others as well as her suitor as being heartless (Grundy 1999: 308, emphasis in the original). In another story circulated by Horace Walpole, Kitty found out that Hammond did not mean marriage and 'broke off all connection, though much in love with him' (Sambrook 2004). Walpole's version certainly helps support the reading of Hammond's poem presented in this thesis, but it would also enlighten somewhat what could have been Montagu's reason for answering. Grundy describes Montagu's answer as being more animated by anger than such other repartees as the one to George Lyttelton, and Halsband names it one of Montagu's feminist poems (Grundy 1999: 309; Halsband 1978: 42). Her personal connection with the young lady might have inspired her quick rebuttal. It is fairly certain that Montagu knew about James Hammond before she wrote her reply. Hammond was known to be one of Lord Chesterfield's protégés and Chesterfield was one of the key players in the opposition against the 'Prime Minister' Sir Robert Walpole whom Montagu is known to have supported, thus placing them on opposite sides politically.

Montagu's response to Hammond's love elegy continues her ongoing critique of what she sees as the false gallantry of men and the community's way of controlling female choice through threats of social ostracism. 'The Answer' mirrors Hammond's in its first person voice and the choice of themes such as courtship and marriage but is written from the point of view of the young lady for whom the elegy was written. In it she repeats arguments she has made

in other poems that women ‘risk more in love or marriage than men do’ (Grundy 1999: 308). Montagu adds an extra dimension to a reader’s experience of Hammond’s poem by structuring her poem as being a direct answer from the young woman addressed in the foregoing elegy. Giving the lady a voice of her own, she is able to show the readers what the male admirer’s proposition would really mean for the life of the young lady in question.

2.5.1 The False Gallantry of Men

Though not an obvious candidate for the group of authors who, in Montagu’s own words, ‘would throw [women] below the Dignity of the human Species’ (Montagu 1947: 28), it seems Hammond’s poem touched upon enough sensitive subjects to warrant an answer from Montagu herself. It is possible that the temptation to give a voice to the lady to whom the elegy was written became too great to resist, as ‘public refutation of such criticism was correspondingly less common for women’ (McCreery 33). To further support this claim, Hammond’s poem does seem to touch upon Montagu’s own personal experiences of unwanted declarations of love. Pope’s letters to her while she was in Turkey seems especially appropriate to mention. In these he holds her responsible for his emotional well being by claiming she ‘has done him injury by making him fall in love, so now she owes him something’ (Grundy 1999: 126). What she felt about Pope’s accusations is not clear, but in her ‘An Answer to a Love Letter in Verse’, a poem most likely written before her answer to Hammond, she criticises such lamenting suitors as they ‘mourn with counterfeited Greife, | And ask so boldly like a begging Theife’. In reality, she says, they are only interested in her because she is new to them. Their love is inconstant and just as easily as they love her they can reject her for another woman: these suitors ‘may soon some other Nymph inflict the Pain’. Her anger towards false gallantry in men is not to be mistaken as she states in the same poem: ‘How vile is Man! How I detest the Ways | Of Artfull Falsehood, and designing Praise!’ (Montagu 1993: 244. 7-8). She also ridiculed such false gallantry in men in number six of her periodical *The Nonsense of Common-Sense*:

How many pretty Gentlemen have been unmercifully jilted by pert Hussies, after having curtisied [sic] to them at *half a Dozen Operas*; nay permitted themselves to be led out *twice*: Yet after theses Encouragements, which amount very near to an Engagement, have refused to read their *Billets-Doux*, and perhaps married other Men under their Noses. – How welcome is a Couplet or two in scorn of Womankind, to such a disappointed lover (Montagu 1947: 26, emphasis in the original).

Her dry and ironic description of the so-called gentlemen lovers who only put on an act of politeness when they want to gain something from a lady and turn on the whole female sex when disappointed does seem to originate from the same frustration she gives voice to in her answer to Hammond. The fact that men are forgetful or worse; that they do not care about the effect their schemes have on the lives of the individual women involved, seems to have been an emotional subject for the writer. Her answer to Hammond, though not so blatant in its critique of men, joins in with her other works that attack male gallantry as being nothing more than a socially condoned predatory sexual pursuit of women. In the poem the female speaker questions her young admirer's love by pointing out how, if the feeling was mutual and she yielded to his wishes, the result would be her social ruin: 'For would'st thou fix Dishonour on my Name, | And give me up to Penitence and Shame!' (Montagu 7-8). The price to be paid for involving herself in a scandal was the public besmirching not only of herself but also of the name of her father or that of her husband. Unvirtuous behaviour from a woman was considered not only to reflect on the character of the woman but on her whole family. The injury to her reputation would be irreparable (Pollak 54-55). In her answer Montagu asks if what the admirer feels for the lady can truly be called love when he insists on her giving in to him even though he should be well aware of the consequences such a choice would have for her.

Reading Montagu's poem, the reader forms an understanding of Hammond's love elegy as not primarily being a proposal of marriage, but possibly a proposal of a more dangerous kind. For, as the female speaker explains, if the admirer were to 'submit to wear the marriage chain' - the words 'submit' and 'chain' giving the impression of something done unwillingly - it would be 'Too sure a Cure for all thy present Pain', meaning a quick way of curing his ailing heart by making him sexually sated, and '*Love* soon would cease to smile, when *Fortune* frown'd' (Montagu 11, 12, 16, emphasis in the original). As both of them lack the necessary financial means for such a prohibited union, she fears his love would vanish with the want of money. Without material wealth the man would cease to be the lover and quickly turn on his wife, and 'blame what [his Soul] solicited before' (Montagu 18). The original truth of their marriage, his ardent courtship of her, would soon be inverted and he would start accusing her of having seduced him into marriage when he was still a 'blinded Youth'. Because of her, he might complain, what could have been a great and noble future becomes an obscure life: being married to her had 'damp'd *Ambitions* nobler Flame'. His wit that could have shone in senates or in courts must now be confined 'To *Madrigales* and *Odes*'

and it would be perceived as all her fault (Montagu 20, 21, 23, emphasis in the original). Or maybe, the speaker suggests, his reaction would not have been to rant and rave, but to have ‘inly mourn’d, and silently repin’d’ (Montagu 28), leaving his wife to struggle with her own jealous thoughts of what occupies her husband’s mind. Either way, this marriage could never have a happy ending. This might seem as an extremely pessimistic and worldly view of marriage to a modern romantic reader, but one must remember that Montagu knew what she was talking about. Many of Montagu’s poems criticize the disappointments of marriage and there is a ‘decidedly cynical tone to most of them’ (Blacksheider 2005b: 90). The reason for this cynicism quite possibly comes from her own marital disappointment. Her reaction to such popular romantic literature as Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa* was that it was ‘uncharitable by Richardson at best’ to ‘arouse feeling for a heroine so clearly bound to fail’ (Pollak 70). It would encourage young women into hoping for something that was completely unrealistic.

According to Montagu’s speaker, Hammond’s lover would be ‘happy either to seduce [her] (so ruining her), or marry her (so involving her in poverty which will certainly destroy his love)’, but either way the lady would be the one that ends up having to suffer (Grundy 1999: 308). The female speaker laments: ‘Had our ill Fate ne’er blown thy dang’rous Flame | Beyond the Limits of a Friend’s cold Name, | I might, upon that score, thy Heart receive, | And with that guiltless Name *my own* deceive’ (Montague 58-61, emphasis in the original). If only he had kept his romantic feeling towards her to himself, then they could have been able to continue as friends. Even though she would be deceiving her own heart in the process and pretend to feel only friendship towards him, at least he would be guiltless of trying to seduce her. His renewed offer of friendship he recommends ‘in vain’, as it is impossible for her to have any type of relationship with him now that she no longer can claim to be ignorant of his feelings for her. She dreads ‘the latent Lover in the Friend’ (Montagu 62, 63). Were she to receive him as a friend she knows she has to risk meeting the lover, who is not gone but ‘latent’, and his ‘dang’rous Flame’, which could turn out to be fatal for her. Now more than ever he presents a danger for her. By continuing on as her friend he would be representing a serious temptation and, as Montagu has pointed out on so many occasions, were she to fall for this temptation the woman is always the one with the most to lose. In the end, what sounded at first as being a confession of undying love when spoken by Hammond’s poet lover turns out in Montagu’s answer to be a possible ruinous situation for the lady. Since he has made it clear that the lover and the friend are the same person she knows she ‘both must take, or both refuse’. Choosing the latter alternative, she quits him completely: ‘tho’ I like the Lover quit

the Love' (Montagu 65, 73). What seems like a rejection of the man is in reality the opposite. It is not the lover she is rejecting, she even admits to having feelings for him, but she understands their love would never survive the harsh light of their reality. What she is rejecting is the perilous situation he offers, as she has to protect herself from the temptation he represents.

2.5.2 Woman Trapped

Though apparently not so blatantly feminist as some of her other poems, her answer to Hammond is still clearly not without a moral message. In contrast to Hammond's emotional speaker, the speaker in Montagu's poem has a far more realistic approach to the situation. The poem begins with the female speaker revealing to her admirer that, far from being the 'unthinking maid' described in Hammond's elegy, she has in fact been aware of the young man's feelings for her for a long time: 'Too well these Lines that fatal Truth declare, | Which long I've known, yet now I blush to hear' (Montagu 1-2). To see it confessed on paper makes it suddenly serious and real. For what hope could that love possibly have 'tho' mutual it should prove' (Montagu 4), when social reality is not in their favour. 'This little Form is fair in vain for you; | In vain for me, thy honest Heart is true' (Montagu 5-6). Montagu's speaker knows she has no choice but to take into account the stringencies of her high social class, as defying them would come with a high price for a young girl. Even if it is 'individual bodies that enact these [gender] significations by becoming stylized into gendered modes', signifying your gender will always be 'a public action' that comes with public consequences (Butler 2007: 191). If he were to seduce her she knows that it would be her and not him who would be ruined in the eyes of her contemporaries. Even entering into matrimony with him against her family's wishes would lead to social ostracism as it involves openly disrespecting her family. Realistically, financial settlements had to accompany love in a successful marriage, as this was a protection for both the wife and the husband (Halsband 1978: 42). Marriage would just be a way to 'gild [her] Ruin with the Name of Wife, | And make [her] a poor *Virtuous* Wretch for Life' (Montagu 9-10), in other words: it would only beautify her ruin by making her seem virtuous but it would not change the fact that she would be socially condemned. Even worse would it be for her should this marriage turn out badly, the speaker knows, as that would give society even more opportunity to reproach her actions: 'When *they* shall cry, whose harsh Reproof I dread, | 'Twas *thy own Deed; thy Folly on thy Head*' (Montagu 34, 35, emphasis in the original). Because, as Pollak explains, 'if a man should abuse that conjugal

power [...] responsibility for that abuse devolves on [the wife]' (Pollak 36). Marital love, in other words, was just another way of sanctioning male authority over women as the success of a marriage was seen as entirely dependent on the conduct of the woman. A judge even ruled that a husband had the right to beat his wife 'provided the stick was no thicker than a man's thumb' (Porter 24). The speaker cannot afford to be swept away by her own emotions as her culture has no compassion for 'thoughtless Youth, | Nor pities Tenderness, nor honours Truth' (Montagu 36-37). She knows that while men might lure women with the promise of commitment, they do not share any of the burdens that same commitment brings (Grundy 1999: 308). This is why she must advise her young admirer to desist.

At the same time as she acknowledges the need to adhere to the financial expectations in marital arrangements, the speaker sharply condemns a marriage made for purely economic reasons. It is thought to be the 'strongest of all Montagu's attacks on mercenary marriage' (Grundy 1999: 309). Such marriages were not new but in the eighteenth century these marriages became more 'blatantly commercial'. The newspapers of the period reported on new marriages in financial terms, as parents were 'anxious to publicise not only the happy event but the wealth of the bride and the social rank of the bridegroom' (Hill 71). Montagu's speaker criticizes how families do not care if their young girls marry sick old men as long as they are wealthy. Their culture says: 'those Virgins act the wiser Part, | who *Hospitals* and *Bedlams* would explore, | To find the Rich, and only dread the Poor' (Montagu 39-41, emphasis in the original). Young women are encouraged to scour hospitals and mental institutions to find rich old men to marry. When on the topic of purely financial marriages the poem's tone becomes angry. The speaker calls the women who enter such mercenary marriages '*legal Prostitutes*' who, by continuing with this dishonest way of life, 'People the World with Folly and Disease' (Montagu 42, 45, emphasis in the original). These women do not marry a man; they marry '*Titles, Deeds, and Rent-Rolls*' and let the best bidder mount 'their venal Bed'. This the family approve of, as they greedily sell their female relatives off in an '*Auction of their Love*' (Montagu 46, 47, 49, emphasis in the original).

Harsh as it may sound, such debunking of financially motivated marriages was actually more conventional than shocking amongst satirists at the time (Grundy 2006: 190). As Hester Chapone, an eighteenth century writer, put it: 'Those marriages which are made up by the parents are *generally* (amongst people of quality or great fortunes,) mere Smithfield bargains, so much ready money for so much land, and my daughter flung into the bargain!'

(quoted in Hill 74, emphasis in the original). If a woman did show some 'Regard to Worth or Sense' and married for love, Montagu's speaker explains, even her own friends would turn on her and see her as a '*degenerate* Child' simply because she dared 'to deviate, by a virtuous Choice, | From her great Name's hereditary Vice' (Montagu 50, 51, 52-53, emphasis in the original). Her contemporaries would view any woman who dared to make her own decision in love instead of following what her family and surrounding society expected of her as a deviant. 'These Scenes my Prudence ushers to my Mind', the speaker continues, 'Of all the Storms and Quicksands I must find, | If I embark upon this Summer-Sea | Where Flatt'ry smooths, and Pleasure gilds the Way' (Montagu 54-57). The lady knows all too well the consequences if she were to marry against her family's wishes, which does not exactly make the idea of following her heart, even though it is a wonderful thought, an easy decision to make. Roy Porter rightly observes: 'It was certainly easier for a woman to achieve notoriety than power', adding: 'the great majority of women who obediently and honourably did what they were told were condemned to a second-class life hedged with briars' (Porter 33). A woman would have to be exceptionally strong if she were to stand against the expectations of not only her culture but also her closest friends and family. For women, the idea of having a free choice of marital partner became nothing more than an illusion in real life. The received opinion was that they should 'permanently depend on men' throughout their lives: first as daughters of their fathers and then, when their fathers had decided on a husband, on 'the "masculine dominion" of their husbands' (Porter 24). When it came to marital matters few women were free to choose their partner.

After having gone through all the evidence for her decision to turn down her poor young admirer the speaker reproaches him for ruining their friendship with his offer of love. As previously explained, she cannot accept his proposal of friendship now that the truth is out. He cannot redo what he has done. No longer able to be around him, she recognises that it is impossible to choose between the lover and the friend because they are the same man. Inside the friend there is still a lover and it is this lover she cannot encourage. She ends the poem by explaining her resolution of quitting him completely: 'Hear then the safe, the firm Resolve I make, | Ne'er to encourage one I must forsake' (Montagu 66-67). Instead of behaving like other young coquettes that consciously flirt with men they do not care for in order to 'Exult in Love from Lovers they despise', she means to do the opposite and not encourage a man she actually loves: 'Their Maxims all revers'd I mean to prove, | And tho' I like the Lover quit the love' (Montagu 71, 72-73).

What seemed like a young man's disappointment in love has, through Montagu's answer, metamorphosed into a picture that is even more lamentable: the love was mutual but because of cultural norms they both had to walk away with disappointed hearts. Far from being indifferent to her lover's grief, the young lady's suffering is presented as being even greater as she struggles with being powerless in a society that expects so much from her and gives so few awards. The male lover, being able to express his emotions without dreading social rebuke, eventually removes his heart from the equation by trying to reclaim his position as her friend. By doing this he makes sure she is the only one occupying the position of vulnerable victim. In the end it is the woman who ends up having lost the most as a result of this emotional affair: not only is she forced to refuse the company of a man she cares for out of fear of falling for temptation, but we see in Hammond's poem that she has to endure being presented as cold and heartless by the same man that put her in that difficult position.

'The Answer' expresses some of the same sentiments as her other poems on women as it criticises the unfair and unsympathetic treatment of women in society. It exposes how having to endure society's punishment alone in matters involving male libertines puts young women at the mercy of both their would-be seducers and their own money hungry relatives. Constantly reminded of what would await them should they make the wrong choice, threats of social repercussions becomes a way of controlling the female sex. It is an absurd cultural phenomenon: if society sees a young girl as too innocent to be a part of the male world, then how can they punish her for being seduced by what they had already decided she would not be able to withstand? As Butler explains:

[T]he repression of the feminine does not require that the agency of repression and the object of repression be ontologically distinct. Indeed, repression may be understood to produce the object that it comes to deny (Butler 2007: 126).

The same way as society can be said to have produced the unnatural figure of the prude it can also be understood to first produce the easily fooled and innocent lady in need of male protection by keeping her separate from the rest of the world, and then punishing her for her ignorance. As Montagu herself said: 'Tis true, the first Lady [Eve] had so little Experience that she harkened to the Persuasions of an impertinent Dangler; and if you mind, he succeeded by persuading her that she was not so wise as she should be' (Montagu 1947: 27). In other words, as Montagu so rightly points out, the less experience a woman is allowed to have in the world, the more easily she will let herself be tempted by suggestions made by deceiving men.

2.6 The Reality of Social Threats

In the Eighteenth century 'woman' was in many ways simply a 'cultural construction as an accessory to masculine desire' (Pollak 53). That this construction of woman carried over from literature to real life is evident from Montagu's realistic analysis of Hammond's written declaration of love. Society was bursting with unwritten rules of accepted gender behaviour. Women's so called 'free choice' became even more of an illusion than it had previously been, as the pressure to conform was increased by the new political arrangements that made the link between marriage and power even tighter than before. So much depended on whether or not a daughter was compliant with her father that the looming threats of social repercussions became even more serious. The article 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution' by Judith Butler explores Simone de Beauvoir's famous theory that 'one is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one'. In it Butler states that 'to *become* a woman' you have to 'compel the body to conform to an historical idea of "woman"', calling it 'a sustained and repeated corporeal project' (Butler 2003: 100). By obediently adhering to a delimited historical idea of what it means to be a 'woman' the female becomes a recognized cultural sign of femininity and thus accepted by her society. Consequently, to be recognized as a 'real woman' in Montagu's day was to perform the role of woman according to the existing social expectations that came with it at the time.

According to Butler, there is 'no possibility of agency or reality outside of the discursive practices that give those terms the intelligibility that they have' (Butler 2007: 202). The only way of expressing oneself within the limits of an existing society is by using the language made available by that very society. Isobel Grundy states in an article: 'Montagu's dependence on the particular occasion means that most current generalizations about her poetry are demonstrably false' (Grundy 2006: 185), pointing to the often ambivalent attitude several feminists have towards the writer. Montagu wrote her poetry dependent on the situation she found herself in and the result can often be found to be contradictory to what we know of her own choices in life. This can be seen as complicating such readings of her poems as the one found in this thesis. Why advise other women to adhere to the gender restrictions placed upon them by society when she herself rebelled against them on several occasions? Reading 'The Answer' one cannot help thinking whether she might be a little hypocritical in insisting on the necessity of conforming to the threat of social ostracism when she herself ran away to get married against her father's wishes. Pollak describes this as being struck 'by the

haunting repetition in her voice of the very axioms that caused her so much pain' (Pollak 71). But it is highly possible that Montagu felt especially qualified for giving such advice, seeing that she had deviated from the norm on several occasions and, as a result, suffered the consequences. Her own refusal of the conventional sexual norms of her time did not come without costs. Marrying without her father's consent she had put herself at serious financial risk by simultaneously relinquishing her right to both marital portion and jointure. Without any special financial arrangements made by a woman's family before the marriage, a wife had 'no rights over her children or to marital property' (Porter 24). This placed Montagu completely at the mercy of the generosity of her husband. She even had to ask her husband's permission to 'dispose of her own 200-pound legacy and to leave her jewels to her daughter' (Merill 93). A woman could only make a will with her husband's consent and even then he could legally choose to ignore it after her death (Porter 24). This was probably very problematic for such an independent person as Montagu, and must have served as a definite incentive to advise other women to do otherwise. As Grundy observes: 'Her desire for approval was very strong, and it battled perpetually with her urge to achieve: that is, to rebel' (Grundy 1999: xxii).

One of the things that make Montagu's answer to Hammond so interesting is how she manages to expose the traditional female identity as being culturally constructed. But to enter into this social territory of gender signification is not an individual choice, as every 'subject' is always inside from the start. Every individual is forced to negotiate the social reality that is created by the normative frame, the goal being to avoid ending up on the outside labelled 'unnatural'. Butler explains such appearances of gender discontinuity and incoherence, like the prude and old maid in the eighteenth century, as being both 'prohibited and produced' by the very laws that seek to establish culturally produced genders as something grounded in biology (Butler 2007: 23). By imposing regulatory frames to a society that exclude a certain amount of people, those that do not belong inside the frame will inevitably be seen as abnormal – a status that will be experienced as being undesirable. The ideal manages to come across as something natural by presenting what it is not as being unnatural and offensive. What seems to be one of Montagu's biggest concerns in 'The Answer' is the fact that the admirer does not recognize the reality of the situation he is putting the young lady in. He does not seem to even consider the idea of her turning down both his offer of love and of friendship because of the social pressure she is under to act the part of the virtuous woman and compliant daughter. In his poem he insists that she is being cold and heartless. That he

does not recognise the problems their continued relationship could cause for the lady just continues to support this image of a selfish man who has very little understanding of the reality of female social experience. As previously discussed, the complex mix of ‘social, religious, psychological, and economical demands’ that was placed on women by the myth of passive womanhood in the eighteenth century was both ‘stringent and contradictory’ (Pollak 69). However, the conflicting images of women that were created still managed to sustain themselves by being presented as biologically unavoidable and becoming part of the cultural consciousness. In the eyes of most of Montagu’s contemporaries, the female identities present in their society were simply due to something inescapable in their nature and thus unchangeable. The reality, on the other hand, of such exclusive dividing of attributes between the genders was often proven false when compared to real men and women. Still, by continuing to feature socially accepted female stereotypes in their works, authors like James Hammond played a big part in sustaining the culturally accepted image of what constituted ‘real women’.

By having her speaker hinting at the possibility of her choosing him regardless of social threats, Montagu shows traces of a desire to rework what she finds to be an inefficient gender norm. Even during the early eighteenth century it was obvious that women were not inanimate objects and that, under all their layers of social compliance, they possessed the possibility to rebel against conventions (Montagu herself being a perfect example). The idea of this female free will, if not moulded to suit the norms of society at that time, posed as a looming threat to the current power structure and needed to be restrained. The knowledge that a woman at any time could decide to ‘take advantage of a man’s benevolence’ generated a certain fear in men and underlined even further the need for ways of limiting and controlling the female sex (Pollak 59). Thus it became increasingly important throughout the century to present the subservient character of women as being biologically determined. The result of this social structure mirrors Butler’s claims that one is only recognized as a real ‘woman’ as long as ‘one function within the dominant heterosexual frame’ (Butler 2007: xi). To deviate from it would mean to not adhere to one’s designated role and the result of such subversive actions would be social ostracism.

What Montagu’s poem can be seen to contribute to Hammond’s elegy, and what made it so ingenious to publish the two pieces together, is an explanation of the disappointment understood to have inspired the original love elegy. Written from the woman’s point of view,

Montagu's poem reworks a reader's perception of the lady and expands one's understanding of her actions towards the disappointed lover. The reader is made to see that the lady is not a naturally cold or unfeeling person. In fact, whatever coldness there can be found in the lady's behaviour in this situation comes as a result of the gendered social pressure she feels from the surrounding society to reject him. Such an embodiment of a culturally accepted image of gender is, according to Butler, more like a survival strategy than anything else as it always occurs in a situation of duress and its ultimate goal is 'cultural survival' (Butler 2003: 100). But, by revealing her awareness of the gender expectations in her society, Montagu also shows her understanding of the female role as being partly open for renegotiation. As long as her society stands unchanged, Montagu's speaker has no other choice but to adhere to the socially expected female image of compliance and turn him down, as the consequences for doing otherwise, and thus going against the accepted image of femininity, would obviously be severe. If this love story were to end differently the norms that govern femininity would have to be rearticulated.

3. Montagu Takes On Swift

In the satires against women that became so popular during the last decades of the seventeenth century women's beauty in particular was a 'pernicious artifice', as female identity was presented as false and nothing more than 'outward show' (King: 432). This made a woman's dressing room a strategic place from which to locate an attack on the female sex. A look into the inner 'sanctum' of femininity, as the boudoir often represented, helped 'forewarn men in order to help them disarm women' (Nussbaum 1976: vi). In this chapter I will deal with one of the most controversial satires by Jonathan Swift, published in 1732, called 'The Lady's Dressing Room' and one of the several literary answers it received by contemporary writers. 'The Reasons that Induced Dr Swift to Write a Poem Called The Lady's Dressing Room' was published in 1734 and has been identified as belonging to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Because of its scatological view of women, many scholars have placed Swift's poem within the misogynist satire against women tradition (see Nussbaum 1976: iv / Landry 1993: 137). By contrast, there are several other scholars who have presented different readings of the poem that make it more complicated to write it off as merely a result of Swift's misogyny. Modern critics still 'notoriously disagree about Swift's targets and his attitudes' (Griffin 1994: 38). Is 'The Lady's Dressing Room' simply an example of its author's misogyny and madness or could Swift have had a different agenda when writing it? Is Montagu's poem truly a defence of the female sex or did she have other reasons to write her answer? My aim in this chapter is to continue to focus on the presentations of gender in the two texts and how they expose socially expected male and female behaviour as inefficient ideals, thus opening them up for negotiation.

3.1 Swift and Humanity

Even though he was described by one of his contemporaries as a man who 'stubbornly resisted any tendency to laughter' (Johnson 1894: 32), it is almost impossible to write anything on the satiric tradition in the eighteenth century, which tended to be humorous, without including Jonathan Swift. Swift was born to his English mother in Dublin in 1667, his father having died eight months before his birth. The fact that he was born in Ireland instead of England was to cause him regret throughout his life (Carpenter 5). He grew up in Ireland with his mother and his two years older sister Jane. Thanks to a generous uncle, Swift was able to get a higher education consisting of a BA from Trinity College in Dublin and an MA from Oxford University. He eventually decided on the church as a career and took orders. But

it did not take long until his amazing talent as a satirist was discovered and soon he was devoting his pen to politics as well as religion, though the two things were not clearly separated at the time (Greenblatt 2301). As one of the founding members of the Scriblerian Club, he was part of the most powerful group of satirists and enjoyed the friendship and admiration of many of his famous contemporaries, including fellow members Alexander Pope and John Gay. Starting out as a Whig supporter, he changed his allegiance to the Tory party in 1710. Serving the Tory government of Oxford and Bolingbroke, Swift became the 'most brilliant political journalist of the day' (Greenblatt 2301). Dr Samuel Johnson seems to have agreed with this observation, stating in his book on Swift's life that Swift 'must be confessed to have dictated for a time the political opinions of the English nation' (Johnson 1894: 29). But, though he became a personal friend of both Oxford and Bolingbroke, they never gave Swift a seat in their counsel. In 1714 their government fell and his hopes of preferment in England ended. After having received the deanship of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, Swift moved unwillingly back to Ireland, where he resided the rest of his life. As far as we know, Swift never married, though there are some, including Dr Johnson, who believe he did so in secret (see Johnson 1894: 1). His life was not completely void of female companionship, however; he enjoyed close friendships with a few women, one of them being Esther Johnson to whom he wrote his 'Stella' poems. Unfortunately, the brilliant writer's last years were troubled by disease. Unwilling to let visitors and friends witness his agony, his self-imposed isolation resulted in a dwindling social life and added to his misery (Ehrenpreis 120). Due to the deafness brought on by his disease, later identified as being Ménière's disease, he had to relinquish his duties as dean of St. Patrick's. The last three years of his life he had guardians appointed by the Court of Chancery to take care of his affairs, as he was deemed to be too ill to handle them himself. Jonathan Swift died in 1745, 78 years old.

Swift's ambiguous relationship to Ireland has always puzzled his critics. Despite his reluctance to live there, he none the less became an efficient ecclesiastical administrator and a leader of Irish resistance to English oppression. In 1724 he famously published a series of public letters in support of Irish independence from Britain under the pseudonym 'M. B. Drapier'. Even though Swift's authorship was known throughout Dublin, no one claimed the £300 offered by the government for information as to the true identity of the Drapier (Greenblatt 2302). It seems Swift's 'sense of justice overcame his romantic sense of colonial patriotism' (Carpenter 9). He was, and still is, revered as a national hero in Ireland. Dr Johnson states that Swift was 'content to be called an Irishman by the Irish; but would

occasionally call himself an Englishman' (Johnson 1894: 1). Swift's letters and prose writings are 'sprinkled with complaints about life in Ireland and the Irish', but to take all his statements at face value and conclude that he really hated Ireland would be to imagine that a great satirist always says what he means. This is not always the case. In fact, unfavourable comments about Ireland are found in 'almost every Anglo-Irish writer of the last two centuries' (Carpenter 5, 6). One of his female friends, Laetitia Pilkington, explained Swift's feelings of melancholy upon his arrival in Ireland as a result of being separated from his friends and loved ones, such as Pope and Bolingbroke (Pilkington 280). No one who truly disliked Ireland and its people would have involved himself so personally in the cause of Irish liberty as Swift did. Dr Johnson relates a story about how Swift complained so much about living in Ireland to his friend Bolingbroke, saying how he was 'willing to quit his deanery for an English Parish', that Bolingbroke in the end 'procured an exchange'. The offer was refused and 'Swift still retained the pleasure of complaining' (Johnson 1894: 36). In the end, as Andrew Carpenter observes in his study called *The Irish Perspective of Jonathan Swift*, Swift was a true Augustan intellectual, and 'there was only one capital of the world of Augustus'. Everything far removed from London life was viewed as 'savage and beastly' (Carpenter 10). But the reality of his feelings toward his country of birth will probably always be up for discussion.

Horace, often acknowledged as one of the fathers of poetry, described a satirist as someone who 'seeks to laugh men out of their folly' (Griffin 1994: 6-7). Swift on the other hand was not so optimistic as to the reformatory powers of satire. As a Dean, he adhered to the ancient religious view that human nature is deeply and permanently flawed and he openly opposed the optimistic view on human nature shared by many of his contemporaries. He wrote in order to help his fellow humans recognize their already existing moral and intellectual limitations. In his satires, Swift did not allow man to escape original sin. Even though he still plays with the conventional idea of the satirist as social reformer, his primary concern seems to be to agitate and unsettle the world of his readers rather than to make them better human beings. In his own words: 'the chief end I propose to my self in all my labors[sic] is to vex the world rather than to divert it' (Swift 2001: 606). The positive images presented in his poetry serve more as a teasingly unattainable ideal than a 'blueprint for social engineers' (Griffin 1994: 61). The often scrutinizing images of human nature presented in his texts have many times earned him the title of a misanthrope. He even claimed the title for himself in a letter to his friend Pope by stating: 'all my love is towards individualls [sic] [...]

principally I hate and detest that animal called man' (Swift 2001: 606-607). Described as 'unpoetic poetry', his poems are often found to be mocking traditional poetic appreciations such as romantic love, unnatural beauty, and even conventional poetic language (Greenblatt 2303). Though not completely devoid of plain comedy, Swift's poetry is predominantly satiric in its purpose; 'The range of his writing is the range of his provocative powers' (Donoghue 24). Swift wrote to provoke and his uncensored descriptions of human life and the human body continue to fascinate and shock their readers to this day.

3.2 Swift and the Notorious 'Dressing Room'

Donald Greene states in his article on Swift's scatological poems: 'Any reader of Jonathan Swift knows that in his analysis of human nature there is an emphasis on, and attitude toward, the anal function that is unique in Western literature' (Greene 672). What Greene is referring to in particular is a series of three 'excremental' poems written by Swift and published in the 1730s. Having later been dubbed his 'unprintables', his contemporaries received them with disgust and condemnation at the time of their publication (Solomon 431). But despite, or maybe rather because of, this scandalous reception, 'The Lady's Dressing Room' went through seven separate editions in its first years, making it a huge commercial success. Now, more than two hundred years later, it remains one of the most popular of Swift's poems. Generations of readers have reacted to its scatological focus on women's biology and have often interpreted it as a symptom of the author's misanthropy, misogyny, and even 'incipient madness' (Solomon 431). But as explained in the first chapter, this satire on female depravity was already an ancient literary tradition by the time Swift came on the scene. In fact, this coarse scatological poetry with its intentionally impolite humour is recognised as part of the Restoration literary context (Solomon 443). Unable to completely write the poem off as the ranting of a woman-hating man on the verge of insanity, it is possible that Swift simply used this crude tradition that he knew from earlier in order to make a point other than that of exposing the alleged gross nature of women.

3.2.1 The Peeping Strephon

One of the key elements in the poem that keeps the attention of literary scholars is the ambiguous role of Strephon, the peeping lover, in the poem. Our first impression of Strephon is that of a young man in love. Finding the room of the beautiful Celia, the object of his affections, empty, he steals in to find out the hidden secrets behind her goddess-like

appearance. What he finds there will end up haunting him for the rest of his life, as the evidence of Celia's physical nature is abundantly displayed to both Strephon and the reader. Not satisfied with a quick look, Strephon decides from the start to make 'a strict survey' of the entire room. The first that catches his eye is a 'dirty smock' that is described as 'well besmeared' beneath the arms with sweat (Swift 7, 11, 12). After this first shock, one repellent thing after another appears. It seems almost compulsive the way Strephon goes through all of Celia's filthy belongings, even holding them up to make a closer inspection. Disgusting things such as dirty, sweaty clothes, combs and brushes filled with 'Sweat, dandruff, powder, lead, and hair', and even her 'ointments for scabby chops' are intimately examined by Strephon who turns everything he finds 'around on every side' (Swift 24, 36, 14). Her washstand is described as showing traces of 'The scraping of her teeth and gums', informing the readers that 'here she spits, and here she spews' (Swift 40, 42). He even goes as far as smelling her used towels, which makes his stomach turn when he discovers them to be 'Begummed, bemattered and beslimed, | With dirt, and sweat, and earwax grimed' (Swift 45-46). Obviously, this is the result of the unlucky combination of a very slovenly woman and a lazy maid. Continuing with his illicit investigation, he eventually comes upon the lady's close stool. Though the speaker begs him not to describe the chest, Strephon has gone too far to be able to stop now. He knows what he will find inside the chest long before he opens the lid, as 'He smelt it all the time before', still he has to 'go through thick and thin' (Swift 82, 80). Opening it, the inevitable truth comes flying out with the stench: Celia, previously described as a goddess, is not only human but extremely unhygienic. Now completely mad with the reality of his disillusion, Strephon almost starts groping 'The bottom of the pan' in 'search of Hope', as hope, the speaker informs us, was the only thing left after Epimetheus had opened Pandora's Box. Unfortunately the only thing Strephon would have achieved by such a desperate groping is to 'foul his hands', so he stops himself before it is too late (Swift 93, 94).

Strephon is appalled to learn that there are 'other elements of the [feminine physique] than beauty' (Paulson 309). This last discovery turns out to be the final drop for the desperate Strephon, and he 'disgusted slunk away' while 'Repeating in his amorous fits, | "Oh! Celia, Celia, Celia shits!"' (Swift 116, 117-118). But, as the speaker explains, Vengeance is a 'goddess never sleeping' and she 'Soon punished Strephon for his peeping'. Now his 'foul imagination' links every woman he sees with what he imagines to be 'all her stinks' (Swift 119-122). Finding all his idealistic conceptions of Celia's body false, he gives up entirely and 'begins to regard women in the same way that Gulliver regarded human beings after his return

from Houyhnhnmland' (Paulson 309): they become disgusting creatures. The disenchanting experience leaves such a mark upon the young man's psyche that he imagines a lady is standing by every time he smells something 'unsavoury' (Swift 123). In the distorted mind of Strephon, the sight of a woman's beauty inevitably evokes the contrasting images of human filth and excrement. To Strephon, a glamorous female appearance is nothing more than a pile of dung.

Strephon's change throughout the poem is not only a personal deterioration of the mind as a result of his disillusionment with Celia; his character also changes in the eyes of the speaker as the poem progresses, consequently altering the reader's perception of him in the process. Strephon sets out on his secret quest the image of the male conqueror venturing into the territory of others without ever having asked for permission. Throughout his voyeuristic expedition he does not once seem to reflect on what he is doing as trespassing, his only concern being his own disappointed illusions. The speaker starts out by calling Strephon a rogue for probing 'too eagerly into the hidden scurrilities of humankind' (Freedman 476). However, it does not take long until the speaker refers to him as 'poor Strephon' while describing how he turns physically ill after having smelled Celia's dirty towels. The once brave adventurer cannot take the truth of what he discovers when the reality of his findings differs so much from what he had anticipated. As a result of this, in addition to completely destroying his view of the female sex, Strephon ruins the image of himself as strong. He becomes someone to be pitied. Strephon's character is reduced to a fragile soul not fit for this new perception of reality. As the pillars upon which he has build his imaginary world crumble, so too does Strephon. After a while, the speaker begs the now 'frightened Strephon' not to go any further: 'Why Strephon will you tell the rest? | And must you needs describe the chest?' (Swift 61, 69 - 70). But Strephon, forced by his obsession to get to the bottom (literally) of Celia's dirt, goes against the speaker's advice and, like the reader, the speaker has no choice but to follow him down 'the hoary deep' (Swift 98).

What Strephon finds in Celia's bedroom undoubtedly damages what is understood to be Celia's claim to a female identity, but Strephon's reaction to it also damages the image of him as masculine. He takes on an almost feminine persona when he ends up on the floor in a fit, as throwing a tantrum is undoubtedly not what one would consider a 'masculine reaction'. Strephon starts to lose his social credibility as a man. To further emphasize this change, Swift removes him further from the realm of expected masculine behaviour when he takes away

Strephon's desire for the female sex. As Judith Butler observes in her article 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution':

Gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed. It seems fair to say that certain kinds of acts are usually interpreted as expressive of a gender core or identity, and that these acts either conform to an expected gender identity or contest that expectation in some way (Butler 2003: 106).

In other words: Strephon no longer conforms to the social expectations surrounding his masculine gender identity. By transforming the character of Strephon from the one in control of the situation into the fragile victim, Swift manages to demasculinize him. One ends up almost feeling sorry for the 'wretched Strephon' who is left 'blind | to all the charms of womankind' (Swift 129-130).

The poem ends with the speaker offering Strephon some seemingly sound advice on how to live in this discovered new gender reality, asking: 'Should I the queen of love refuse | Because she rose from stinking ooze?' (Swift 131-132). Clearly the narrator has not suffered the same consequences from the shocking discovery in Celia's bedchamber as Strephon. Apparently much more ready to accept reality as it appears, the speaker points out that any man who 'looks behind the scene' (Swift 133) will be disappointed by what he finds as 'foulness is the price he pays for the truth' (Donoghue 210). The speaker suggests that Strephon should stop over-reacting and simply 'stop his nose' whenever Celia is near. Eventually, the speaker proposes, Strephon will learn to think like himself and simply 'bless his ravished eyes to see | Such order from confusion sprung, | Such gaudy tulips raised from dung' (Swift 142-144). Strephon has to stop resenting women for trying to hide their disgusting human sides and instead appreciate the effort they make to please men. Now that he knows the truth, Strephon needs to train himself into accepting what he sees at face value and not go looking for what is hidden beneath. In other words: it is never a good idea to make excursions into women's private chests.

3.2.2 Celia Exposed

Though we only catch a glimpse of her sashaying out of her dressing room in all her constructed glory at the start of the text, Celia's presence is felt throughout the poem. How we interpret her role is of great importance to our understanding of Swift's main agenda. In his own time, Swift's poem must have been read as nothing more than social provocation and

degradation of women. From the point of view of a literary culture that wrote to better their readers, such satire of inherent human frailties as ‘The Lady’s Dressing Room’ seemed a ‘futile and misanthropic aim’ since biological offenses like Celia’s could mortify but never be corrected (Solomon 440). Later the same year as its publication, Swift defended his controversial poem by releasing ‘A Modest Defence of a Late Poem by an Unknown Author, called, The Lady’s Dressing Room’. In it he avers that ‘no *Poem* was ever written with a better Design for the Service of the [female] *Sex*’ (Swift 1962: 5, emphasis in the original). Claiming that the poem’s aim was simply to promote cleanliness in women, which makes the filthy Celia’s exposure simply a cautionary tale, he goes on to conclude that the satiric attack would not hurt women who practised good hygiene:

Cleanliness hath, in all polite Ages and Nations, been esteemed the chief corporeal Perfection in *Women* [...] I do not doubt, but that there is a great Number of young Ladies [...] who in reading that Poem, find great Complacency in their own Minds, from Consciousness that the Satyrical [sic] Part in the *Lady’s Dressing-Room*, does not in the least affect them (Swift 1962: 4-5, emphasis in the original).

But, contrary to Swift’s own explanation, there is ample evidence to be found in both the poem itself and in other texts by him that suggests that the original aim of ‘The Lady’s Dressing Room’ was more complicated. Swift’s own personal relationships with women support the search for an alternative meaning behind the poem’s anti-female façade. Swift openly acknowledged Esther ‘Stella’ Johnson as being his ‘dearest, most intimate companion’ and best friend (Ehrenpreis 18, 25) and his last birthday poem to her has been described as ‘one of the most tender and genuinely convincing love poems ever written’ (Greene 687). He also put ‘considerable effort’ into promoting the published writings of his female Irish compatriot Mary Barber (Grant 113) in a time when published women writers were often likened to ‘ignorant prostitutes’ (Merill 145). Adding this to what has already been said about Swift’s inclinations towards provocation and his scepticism towards the human race in general, it seems inevitable that the poem should invite a much more complex understanding of the role of the female than simply serving as a representative of deceiving women everywhere.

It is not difficult to understand why ‘The Lady’s Dressing Room’ is frequently labelled a ‘misogynist’ poem. The object of visual scrutiny in the text is the feminine body, which seems to support the cultural conception feminists have rebelled against from the early days of their movement: that ‘a woman “is” her face and figure’ (King: 435). Apart from her first introduction by the speaker as ‘haughty Celia’ who spends five hours getting dressed

(Swift 2), she is entirely represented by the bodily residue found in her messy dressing room. Confronted with what is understood to be the truth behind her fake façade, her lack of hygiene and her filth, it is impossible for a reader not to share some of Strephon's disgust. But even though the readers watch Strephon methodically go through Celia's personal belongings, the reality is that they know just as little about who she really is as Strephon. The speaker reveals nothing about the real Celia other than what Strephon himself interprets from his findings. Celia cannot defend herself as she has been removed from the scene and thus effectively silenced. All that is left to represent her is Strephon's imagination, the same imagination that deluded him into thinking that women did not excrete in the first place. By linking his narrative solely to the consciousness of Strephon, Swift equips his readers with something of a 'tunnel-vision', restricting them from seeing a larger picture. Celia might have had many clean clothes lying in her closet only Strephon went straight for the dirty laundry. It is probable that she squeezes blackheads from her nose in front of her magnifying glass, but the only actual proof of it happening is in Strephon's imagination. And if this is part of her morning toilette, would it be as gross as he makes it out to be? What Strephon actually sees enlarged and unnatural in that mirror is his own head. Could it be that the ability to exaggerate normal things and make them seem unnatural is not only the characteristic of a magnifying glass but of Strephon's mind as well? From what we know of Strephon, as being a man who turns human women into goddesses, he is just as likely to magnify the bad as well as the good.

When it comes to our perception of Celia as disgusting, Strephon's imagination is 'as much to blame as the natural world' (Freedman 483). The idea of human beings as excreting creatures cannot be news to him. In fact, there is no doubt that Strephon, being human himself, produces his own amount of stinks. However, it is when Celia, whom he sees as a paragon, is found to belong to the same category as himself and the rest of humanity that the notion of bodily functions becomes harmful for his psyche. In the eyes of Strephon it is exactly this discovery of Celia as being more similar to him in her humanness than he had imagined that eventually turns into the crime of women in general. The gap between male and female diminishes and 'when such categories come into question, the reality of gender is also put into crisis'. It becomes unclear how to 'distinguish the real from the unreal' because the criteria after which reality has previously been measured has been exposed as being unreal itself (Butler 2007: xxiv). This could also be one of the reasons why Strephon loses his interest in the female sex: the sex that he has been admiring simply does not exist. When

Celia is knocked down from the position of goddess in Strephon's mind, it is not only she that falls from grace but the entire female sex. If Celia, whom Strephon sees as representing everything truly feminine, is so disgusting underneath her immaculate surface, imagine then the true nature of all the other women! It is difficult to decide what version of Strephon the poem satirizes more: the one living in an irrational state of illusion, or the one finding himself in an irrational state of despair when this illusion collapses. Either way, it is obvious that there must be something more behind the portrayal of the young Strephon's clash with reality than simply Swift taking a swing at the female sex. Donald Greene points out that when Strephon ends up with his 'excremental vision' it does not necessarily mean he mirrors his creator. If 'their [the Strephons of the world] excessive "sensibility", or rather egotism, will be satisfied with nothing less than a flawless Statira or an odourless Celia', Greene continues, 'then let them stop their noses; only temporary, one hopes, until they acquire more sense' (Greene 677, 679).

Having established the possibility of the poem's aim as being wider than simply hurting the female sex, there is still no doubt that Swift was influenced by the anti-feminist satirical tradition. Even if Swift only used the female character of Celia as a way to expose the flaws of humanity, making the figure of a woman more the means than the actual target of the satire, he still links women to the grotesque side of human nature. By presenting what is culturally perceived as being Celia's femininity, namely her outward appearance, as being a symbol of corrupt eighteenth century society, Swift none the less leaves his readers with a sense of having exposed corruption beneath a 'constructed female surface' (King: 432). In fact, he ends up making the close-stole full of excrement a metaphor for Celia's true identity. That is, if his poem does have a higher aim it does not necessarily exempt Swift from the charge of misogyny. No matter what his personal feelings towards women were in reality, there is still no denying the fact that Celia in 'The Lady's Dressing Room' becomes the 'poster girl' for covered up dirt and human erosion. As the character of Strephon so tragically demonstrated: the way from individual experience to social generalisation is very short indeed. The need for gender resignification is evident almost from the start.

3.2.3 The Gap Between Art and Reality

When reading satire, it is always difficult to determine when and to what extent the author agrees with his speaker. The concluding paragraph of 'The Lady's Dressing Room' wherein the speaker disassociates himself from Strephon's apparent loss of sanity has both engaged

and puzzled its readers. What he seems to be advocating is that we must ‘cling to the pleasant delusion if we are not to go mad, like Strephon, with our foul imagination’ (Donoghue 210). This lesson seems simple enough, but it is tempting to go against the prudent narrator’s recommendation and try to go beneath the surface of the poem’s seemingly straightforward message. One of the reasons why the poem seems to encourage further interpretation is that the chest has already been opened and, contrary to Pandora’s Box, Strephon found no hope lingering at its bottom. William Freedman says in his essay on Swift’s satire: ‘Swift, we assume, understood that we would continue to perceive the stinking ooze and smell the dung [...] long after the Queen of Love and the gaudy Tulips had receded from experience and memory’ (Freedman 485). What Swift seems to be presenting is yet another of his teasingly unattainable ideals. Certainly, it might be nice to follow the speaker’s advice and go on living with pleasant illusions about females, but thanks to Swift’s vivid imagery that option is no longer available to his readers. This makes it very difficult to take the narrator’s arguments of continuing to ignore the obvious flaws in the female ideal as a literal reflection of Swift’s own attitude towards life, especially when one remembers that a satirist’s main job is to expose the delusions of their readers. As Swift himself said in his ‘Modest Defence’: ‘I cannot but lament the prevailing ill Taste among us which is not able to discover that useful Satyr running through every Line [of the poem]’ (Swift 1962: 4).

Swift’s alleged misogyny has been explained as originating from his misanthropy. Not just a Christian but a Dean, he believed in man’s original sin. He often expressed his dislike for human pride and never missed an opportunity to shatter the illusion that we can rise above our sinful nature (Greenblatt 2589). Thus, it was almost one of his primary aims to ‘differentiate his work from the lies of contemporary poets’ (Woodman 113). One of the poetic genres that championed the illusion of femininity as being something divine was pastoral poetry. Pastoral poetry was an ancient poetic genre that is identified by its romantic representation of the countryside and human nature. It was not uncommon to find feminine cheeks described as roses and ‘eyes like stars’ in a pastoral poem (Messenger 5). It enjoyed great success in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Britain, but the genre was increasingly criticized and mocked for its obvious lack of realism at the start of the century and the genre largely died out during the last part of the period. Augustan writers, with their ‘bent towards realism and ethical didacticism’, would sometimes turn the familiar pastoral genre back on itself in order to write ‘realistic’ parodies of the conventional pastorals, generally known as mock-pastorals (Ross xviii). As a man who never beautified the truth,

Swift found the pseudo-pastoral tradition of 'singing the bodily and angelic praises of women while ignoring their moral and intellectual aspects' offensive. In 'The Lady's Dressing Room' he is mocking 'a genuine and common peril in the society of his life time' (Ehrenpreis 42). By calling attention to how continuing to feed such obvious unrealistic gender ideals is not conducive to actual human relationships, he illustrates how 'the Strephon's among us end up pinned inside the wreckage of their simplistic understandings of female nature' (King: 433). The poem exposes not only the 'dirty' side of female nature but also the foolishness of the men who believe in such etherealized notions of femininity as presented in romantic pastoral poetry.

Though clearly harbouring dislike for the entire pastoral genre and its idyllic literary reality, there are suggestions as to what writer in particular Swift could have been satirizing. According to Harry M. Solomon, Swift might have written 'The Lady's Dressing Room' as an intentionally mock of his old enemy Tom D'Urfey's poem from 1690 called 'Paid For Peeping'. Describing D'Urfey's poem as being 'exactly the facile and sexually suggestive idealization which Swift seems to have abhorred', Solomon points to Swift's line 'punished Strephon for his peeping' as possibly being an imbedded hint of such a specific satiric aim (D'Urfey 67; Swift 120; Solomon 437, 433). Known as the 'most prolific and popular writer and editor of pastoral songs' in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, Tom D'Urfey was one of the authors responsible for the reappearance of 'songs in praise of milk-maids and husbandmen' during that period (Sambrook 1983: 96). When it comes to his own poems, D'Urfey tended to give the tradition of pastoral idealization a 'deliberate titillating twist' (Solomon 440), as is the case with the slightly naughty 'Paid for Peeping'. If Swift's poem is a satiric rendition of D'Urfey's poem then it is true to form as it not only borrows from D'Urfey's poem but completely overthrows it, turning the original scenario back on itself. 'Paid for Peeping' is the perfect example of the pastoral tradition of female idealization. In it we meet another young man in love, only this one manages to spy on his beloved while she is undressing in her dressing room through a hole in the wall. Though there is mentioning of a close stool in this poem as well, what this lover observes is a far cry from the disillusioning sight that meets Swift's peeping fool. D'Urfey's hero sees a real goddess in all her nude perfection and undergoes as a result the complete opposite transformation of Swift's leading man. He ends up crushed that he might never look upon such divinity ever again. Swift's Strephon, on the other hand, is punished for his peeping when he is forced to come to terms with the realisation that 'the world of pastoral is the only environment in which women are

free of nature's liquid necessity' (Solomon 439). It is plausible that Swift, driven by his concern for what damage such unrealistic expectations created by romantic poetry could cause in real life, wrote 'The Lady's Dressing Room' more in defence of his common sense approach to male and female relationships than as a vicious attack on women. This is not the first time that Swift has mocked the pastoral literary standard of women by exposing what consequences harbouring such ideals can have in real life in his satires. Ellen Pollak describes Swift's literary technique as 'poetically exploiting the dissonance between reality and myth' (Pollak 12). In one of his other scatological poems called 'Cassinus and Peter', published in 1734, it is the man's body that is described as disgusting. Here Peter visits the room of his friend Cassinus only to find him in a terrible state. After a while the reason for his melancholy is revealed: like Strephon, Cassinus has discovered his sweetheart Celia's excremental functions. Cassinus too ends up moaning the recognizable phrase: 'Celia, Celia, Celia shits!'. The absurdity of Cassinus' reaction is seriously underlined as he is described as sitting surrounded by his own dirt: how dare he demand such a high standard in his woman when he is so far from any ideal himself (see Swift 1983: 463-466)!

What is clear in 'The Lady's Dressing Room' is that eighteenth century gender ideals are obvious illusions that crumble when exposed. Swift seems to revel in the fact that he is fearlessly destroying cultural taboos and pretences, as he sees them as standing in the way of a more truthful existence. This pleasure in the destructions of social norms 'coexist[s] with and is indeed intensified by the powerful insistence on how necessary they are' (Woodman 112). The readers of 'The Lady's Dressing Room' are therefore presented with something of a Swiftian paradox: it is only by taking away his readers' illusions that he can disclose their enormous social importance. It has been suggested that by writing this poem Swift is exploring the old literary cliché 'especially beloved of satirists' that 'one must always strip away specious surfaces to get to the truth' in order to expose it to his readers (Griffin 1994: 54). Strephon wanted to know it all, in fact he insisted upon it being his right by entering into Celia's chambers uninvited. Penetrating the truth about her in such a devious manner ruins his life by leaving him with a 'foul imagination'. Swift's readers may ask themselves: is it best to go through life clinging to pleasant illusions or is it better to embrace the truth? Swift offers up no real answer, instead he forces his readers to confront their own gender ideals by revealing the foolishness of such culturally accepted illusions as the possibility of a female perfection so exalted as to preclude body functions. Instead of describing this fake image of women as a shrewd female trick to ensnare men, as many of the satires against women writers

did at the time, Swift accuses both men and women of sustaining such social fantasies. Gender differences melt into the larger picture of general human life and culture. It is very much on account of such 'degendering' that scholars have found something other than simple misogyny present in the poem. One begins to understand that Strephon's need to ignore the truth is just as much to blame as Celia's need to hide it: if her contemporaries did not expect it, she would not have to act it. Kathryn R. King explains:

The important point is not that the beauty Celia takes out into the public world is deceptive, or that female bodily existence is inherently disgusting [...] The point, rather, is that Strephon entertains the idea of the feminine that bears little relation to the necessities of actual female existence (King: 433).

What one can take from this is the understanding that it is primarily Strephon and the society that made him that are the satirical targets and not the whole female sex. They are the ones who put men and women in these situations by continuing to circulate obviously inefficient feminine ideals thus maintaining these unrealistic expectations towards women. No matter how ruined the image of women is in the eyes of Strephon after his discovery, in the end one cannot deny that the joke is on him.

3.3 Montagu: 'Vengeance, Goddess never sleeping'

Laetitia Pilkington writes in her *Memoirs*: 'I really think [Swift] sometimes chose Subjects [...] which could serve for no other End except that of turning the Reader's Stomach, as it did my Mother's, who, upon reading the *Lady's Dressing-room*, instantly threw up her Dinner' (Pilkington 314, emphasis in the original). In addition to making Mrs. Pilkington's mother vomit, the poem generated a lot of different responses upon its publication. From the literary world 'The Lady's Dressing Room' received three written responses in the form of anonymous poems; one of them has been identified as belonging to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Her response, called 'The Dean's Provocation for Writing The Lady's Dressing-Room. A Poem', appeared in print as a handsome, anonymous folio two years after the release of Swift's original. Even though she herself did not include it in the album of acknowledged work she sometimes showed her friends, the discovery of a draft and a fair copy of the poem among her personal belongings clearly points to her as being the anonymous retaliator. The exact circumstances of its publication are as usual unknown, but Robert Halsband sees the published version's unusually stately appearance as possible proof of her personal involvement (Halsband 1970: 227). On the other hand, the fair copy found among her belongings, with the title 'The Reasons that Induced Dr S[wift] to write a Poem

call'd The Lady's Dressing room', is less like the published version than the discovered draft, which makes it possible that there could have been someone other than Montagu herself involved in the actual publication of the poem (Grundy 1999: 342 - 343). Like with most eighteenth century publications, whether or not Montagu was actually personally involved in its publication remains unclear. In this thesis I am going to use the fair copy version of the poem that was found in Montagu's own handwriting since it is this version that is used in both *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* and the collection of Montagu's works edited by Halsband and Grundy (see Greenblatt 2593; Montagu 1993: 273).

3.3.1 The Reasons that Induced Montague to Write Swift an Answer

Donna Landry has used Montagu's satirical answer as evidence of Swift's poem 'The Lady's Dressing Room' having been read as misogynist in his own time (Landry 1993: 137). Though I agree with Landry when she claims that Montagu's poem came as a reaction to the misogyny in Swift's poem, I am inclined to believe that his misogyny was not the only thing or even the primary thing she was reacting to in her answer. Montagu had several personal as well as professional reasons, apart from her sex, that could inspire a literary rebuttal. As is evident in her courtship letters with Edward Wortley Montagu, one of Montagu's ways of dealing with male criticism of the female sex was to claim that '*she* was an exception' from the norm (Grundy 1999: 343, emphasis in the original). Instead she would apply the satire on other women, but not on herself. This is hardly the reaction of someone who risks public exposure in order to support female solidarity. It makes one wonder what it was with this particular satire that made it warrant such a personal retaliation on her part.

Even though Swift and Montagu allegedly never met in person they must have known about each other from when they both resided in London (Halsband 1970: 227). Swift, a generation older than Montagu, was not only a well-known public figure at the time but also a close friend of Montagu's former confidant turned foe Alexander Pope. Although her main burden in 'The Reasons' is an attack on Swift, she never the less manages to throw glances at both his poetical friend, Alexander Pope, and his political one, Lord Oxford (Halsband 1970: 227). Aside from his association with Pope, Swift belonged to the political opposition of the Tories. Montagu's father, the Marques of Dorchester, was a member of the Whig Kit-Cat Club and Montagu herself had been affiliated with the Whig party from an early age. She 'abhorred Tories of all persuasion'. As an expatriate in Italy in the 1750s Montagu fully expressed her loathing of Swift in private letters to her daughter Lady Bute. In them she

reproaches him for his 'love of flattery' and his 'vain and trifling character', concluding that 'his ridiculing of both "Law and Decency"' was so reprehensible that it 'could only be explained by his being mad'. In her old age, suffering from 'hardening of her aristocratic prejudices', she commented on Swift's social origins as entitling him to be nothing more than 'a link-boy' (Halsband 1970: 228). A link-boy, popularly called a 'moon curser', was a low status position often held by young boys who would hire themselves out as torch bearers to people travelling the streets at night. But link-boys had a reputation of being untrustworthy as there were several incidents of link-boys leading their passengers into dark passages and then assisting criminals in robbing them (see Grose: 'Moon curser'). There is no doubt that Swift was someone Montagu strongly disliked.

The personal lampoon was the 'chosen literary mode of the 1730s' (Grundy 1999: 307). What separates a lampoon from an ordinary satire is that where a satire is aimed at a general target a lampoon is an attack on a private individual (Seidel 33). In Montagu's 'The Reasons' the reader is left with no doubt as to whom the male character is modelled after, as her target is identified already in the poem's title: 'The Reasons That Induced Dr S[wift] to Write a Poem Called The Lady's Dressing Room'. Montagu herself had been the victim of this personal form of literary attack through her controversy with Pope. True to the image of the learned lady at the time, Pope's attacks described her as being dirty, promiscuous, and vain. This image was supported by Horace Walpole's story of what had initiated the animosity between the two former friends. According to Walpole, Montagu borrowed a pair of sheets from Pope when they were neighbours at Twickenham, which she never returned. When Pope finally enquired after them they came back unwashed and dirty! Seeing that Walpole allegedly hated Montagu because of her close friendship with his stepmother Maria Skerrett - even stating in a letter to a friend that he 'abhor[ed] her' (Walpole volume 35: 489) - the story is hardly credible (Brant x). On the other hand, Walpole himself claimed that 'Her dirt, and their mutual economy' made the story 'not quite incredible' (Walpole volume 34: 255). Even so, as previously mentioned, Pope's accusations, true or untrue, had a way of continuing to taint their victim long after their utterance. The idea of dirt, blood, and being unwashed continued to attach itself to Montagu in anecdotal record (Landry 1998: 308). The fact that it is precisely Celia's bad hygiene that ends up costing her her feminine reputation could have struck a nerve with Montagu as it would not only remind her of the degrading image of herself, but also of the man who so persistently projected it. In Pope's most blatant personal attack on Montagu, a short poem called 'To Ld. Hervey and Lady Mary Wortley'

most likely written around 1733, he even goes as far as to describe Montagu and her close friend as the 'dirty Pair' (Pope 1954: 357. 5). There is no real evidence to support the idea that Swift purposely meant for his poem to direct a blow in the direction of the enemy of his good friend, but, as Dr Johnson so rightly observes: 'Personal resentment, though no laudable motive to satire, can add great force to general principles' (Johnson 1781: 171). It is possible that Montagu saw Swift's poem as simply another element in Pope's smear campaign against her person, one that she was not going to let pass in silence.

Not only an ingeniously written example of 'pointed judgements by a woman writer of this era upon the works of her male contemporaries' (Keith 80), Montagu's answer is an interesting study in female revenge. Instead of trying to prove Swift wrong by stressing the moral strength of the female sex, the defence technique used by earlier defenders of women, she substitutes his moralistic conclusion with personal pique. The tone in her poem is far more personal than in Swift's original poem, as the line between literature and reality is blurred when she collapses the fictional Strephon of 'The Lady's Dressing Room' with his creator. She does not hold anything back, instead she deliberately and with precision attacks every facet of what one can assume to represent Swift's male pride: his appearance, his financial wealth, his wit, his political importance, his famous friends, his sexual performance, and his Irish loyalty. By doing this she not only manages to undermine the force of Swift's original poem, but also exposes the personal character of Swift as being nothing more than a pose. As previously mentioned, she leaves no doubt surrounding the identity of the unsympathetic Doctor, as she is continually referring to her male character as 'the reverend lover', 'the Priest', and 'the disappointing Dean'. The result is a 'sexually humiliating experience worse than Strephon's' (Grundy 2006: 192). No matter how noble her defence of her own sex might seem, there is no doubt that Montagu wanted her answer to hurt, not just men in general but Jonathan Swift in particular.

The reasons why Montagu was provoked to write an answer to this particular poem remain unclear; maybe she really did write it purely as a defence of women, or maybe she wanted the satisfaction of humiliating a close friend of her enemy Pope. That this friend also happened to be someone she herself detested must have made it even more rewarding. As a writer Montagu rarely commented on her own work, but frequently satirized that of others (Merill 211). Taking on the famous author of *Gulliver's Travel* must also have added a certain bonus of prestige to the project. In his book *Satire: a Critical Reintroduction*, Dustin Griffin

describes satire as having an element of public performance. 'As rhetorical performance', he explains, 'satire is designed to win the admiration and applause of a reading audience not for the ardour or acuteness of its moral concern but for the brilliant wit of the satirist as rhetorician' (Griffin 1994: 71). What better way to prove yourself to your audience of readers than to successfully attack one of the reigning masters of the satirical genre? In 'The Reasons' Montagu departs from her customary poetic form of the heroic couplet in order to use the 'standard parodic technique' of turning the opponent's rhythms and rhymes 'back on their creator', a technique she also used on Pope (Landry 1993: 137). Montagu cleverly imitates Swift's octosyllabic couplets, his 'blunt, unpoetic diction', his use of digression and animal parallels, even incorporating his scatological vocabulary in her concluding lines (Halsband 1978: 41). The result is a damaging parody of both Swift the man and Swift the writer.

3.3.2 The Poor Performance of Dr Swift

Already from the start of the poem it is clear that the character of Dr Swift is not one that is meant to inspire compassion in the readers. The first impression of him is of a man not only meticulous about his appearance, but ridiculously vain: 'The Doctor in a clean starch'd band, | His Golden Snuff box in his hand, | with care his Di'mond ring displays | And Artful shews its various Rays' (Montagu 1-4). One cannot help but laugh at the image of this man wearing a clean starched clerical collar walking down the street desperately trying to display his wealth to the people he meets by carrying his golden snuff box in his hand (instead of keeping it in his pocket) and making sure that his diamond ring sparkles in the sunlight. It comes across as a deliberate attempt to appear richer than what he actually is. The Doctor is presented as a typical self-important poser. This is further emphasized when we are told that he has tried for a long time to gain entrance to the bedchamber of his 'dearest Betty' by impressing her with 'all his Gallantry and Wit' and boasting about his previous political importance, telling her 'what part he bore | In Oxford's schemes in days of yore' (Montagu 6, 10, 11-12), referring to Swift's old political friend Lord Oxford. But just like his failed attempts to manipulate the public's opinion about his personal wealth and political importance, his schemes to charm his way into Betty's bed turn out unsuccessful. The person who eventually comes to the love struck doctor's rescue is Betty's maid Jenny. She takes pity on the rhyming admirer and tips him off about the 'twice two pound' her lady charges for her services: 'My Lady vows without that Summ | It is in vain you write or come' (Montagu 19-20). The readers are never told whether or not Dr Swift knew from the start what kind of lady he was pursuing, but now

that he has the key to the kingdom he does not seem to hesitate to bring 'the Destin'd Offering' on his next visit to the lady (Montagu 21). Gone is the unsuspecting male who sneaks into his lover's chambers, Montagu's doctor is a man who is fully aware of what kind of lady he is addressing: a prostitute he has to pay for sexual favour rendered. The idea of a clergyman not only embarrassingly preoccupied with appearances, wealth, and power but also an eager customer of a prostitute certainly completes the picture of the ultimate hypocrite.

With high expectations he approaches the lady to 'preach his Flame' (Montagu 24) while handing her the gold. The lady, having been paid, 'Expects the Doctor's warm Embrace' (Montagu 30), but is surprised to find that nothing happens. Equally surprised is the 'Reverend Lover' who 'Peeps in her Bubbys, and her Eyes, | And kisses both, and trys – and trys'. Thus continues the whole evening in 'this Hellish Play' without results (Montagu 63, 64-65, 66). Provoked by the feeling of having thrown his money away on nothing and most likely humiliated by his poor performance, the Doctor tries to save face by blaming the whole incident on the woman: 'He swore, The fault is not [in] me. | Your damn'd Close stool so near my Nose, | Your Dirty Smock, and Stinking Toes, | Would make a Hercules as tame | As any Beau that you can name' (Montagu 69-73). Furious at his audacity, Betty points to his age 'Sixty odd' as being the real culprit and tries to turn him out of her room (the real Swift having turned sixty-five in 1732). Doctor Swift on the other hand cannot seem to let go of the fact that he has lost money as well as his pride and refuses to leave without the four pounds, exclaiming: 'nothing done, I'll nothing pay' (Montagu 79). The fact that it was his own disappointing inability to 'rise to the occasion' that resulted in the evening's disappointment does not seem to concern him. That it is the loss of money and not his love for the lady that is understood to be the reason for his wanting to stay underlines his already unsympathetic image in the eyes of the readers. Not only is he vain and with quite a high opinion of his own skills and merits, but he is embarrassingly mean with his money as well. The ill-fated rendezvous comes to an end with the 'disappointed Dean' threatening: 'I'll be revenged, you saucy quean [...] I'll so describe your dressing room | The very Irish shall not come' (Montagu 84-87). Not able to get his way with the lady, neither physically nor financially, the Doctor vows he will take his revenge by writing. Fuelled by his own high opinion of his literary influence and importance, he will retaliate by composing such a vile poem about the lady in question that anyone who reads it will forever shun her. Thus he effectively will sabotage her livelihood. This burst of anger is the final blow to his masculine image: not only can he not perform sexually but his reaction exposes him as being both devious and childish.

He turns into a boy prone to fits of rage and acts of retaliation when he does not get what he wants. And there, according to Montagu, is the true reason why Dr Swift would write a poem called 'A Lady's Dressing Room': a petty revenge for the loss of pride and four pounds.

Reducing Swift's male identity by presenting him as sexually impotent, Montagu manages to lessen the impact of Swift's allegations against women. She effectively removes the generality and force of Swift's humiliating observations on female identity by linking his poetic inspiration to a single incident of personal disappointment. Dr Swift's self-satisfaction is 'hilariously undermined by the narrative of impotence on one side and frustration on the other' (Grundy 2006: 192). His masculinity, which is understood as the foundation of his authority over women, is represented by his ability to function sexually; when this is removed so is his power over women. If Swift cannot perform his male gender satisfactory he loses this masculine prerogative in the eyes of his society. As mentioned in the previous chapter: the realization of one's assigned gender is understood to be a social survival strategy 'within compulsory systems' with 'clearly punitive consequences'. Those who fail their gender act are punished by their society (Butler 2007: 190). When Doctor Swift failed in his sexual performance he also failed his gender and the punishment is shame and ridicule.

In addition to sexually humiliating him, Montagu also finds a way to undermine Swift's advocacy of Irish causes. By having the dean's final statement be: 'The very Irish shall not come', she manages to present his involvement in the Irish cause as hypocritical. Doctor Swift's statement is understood to mean that he thinks of the Irish as being the lowest of the low: if not even the Irish will show up then imagine how disgusting his description of her will be. The general English attitude towards the Irish at the time was negative; the Irish were 'browbeaten, plundered, and despised' (Plumb 181). To question Swift's loyalty to his Irish countrymen when he was known to take an active part in the Irish resistance to the English must have been written by Montagu in order to hit Swift where she knew it would really hurt. By 1734, when Montagu's poem was released, Swift had already been living in Ireland for quite some time, having moved there in 1714. Even so, knowing his publicly expressed ambiguous relationship with the country, it is possible that several of Montagu's readers were not aware of Swift's Irish nationality, but saw him as a fellow Englishman. Having him exclaim this racist statement would add 'a typical English anti-Irish racist' to the list of the Doctor's other deplorable qualities such as 'misogynist, penny-pinching, and impotent' (Landry 1993: 137). On the other hand, if they saw him as Irish the effect would be

even greater as it would mean he describes himself as belonging to the category of men who are the last ones to stop going to a prostitute with a reputation of being unhygienic. Either way, the outcome is rather unflattering.

What has captivated readers of Montagu's response since its publication is not only its singeing wit, but also its boldness. Taking into account the fact that the literary scene of that time was quite small, everyone knew about practically everybody else, there is no reason to doubt that the caricature painted of Swift in the poem is backed by actual facts, making him easily recognizable to his contemporaries. In addition to Dr Swift's mentioned clerical collar, Swift's will is said to have actually mentioned a 'tortoiseshell and gold snuff-box', and a diamond ring 'said to have been his' was left to Sommerville College in Oxford (Montagu 1993: 273n). Montagu is known to have objected to what she saw as Swift's vanity, the fact that he liked to boast about his relationships to important people, and his defiant indecency, which she considered 'not only inappropriate for a clergyman but also a sign of low breeding' (Greenblatt 2593). All of this is presented mockingly in her poem and makes it easy to imagine Swift actually having paraded around holding his gold snuff-box and showcasing his diamond ring. The idea that a woman in the eighteenth century would dare to write such a hard-hitting and humiliating parody on one of the most famous male writers of the day is nothing short of fascinating. Jennifer Keith suggests that this boldness could be a product of 'her class privilege trumping the constraints of her gender' (Keith 80). Though this might have had something to do with it, seeing that her class afforded her certain privileges denied to women from the lower classes, her status as a noble lady also came with restrictions and expectations that none the less made a public literary career unacceptable, especially if it involved the use of vulgar language. That she went ahead and did it anyway, using male impotence both as 'bleak comedy' and as the means to 'reverse traditional male satire' on women (Grundy 1999: 343-344), should none the less be seen as boldly defiant of social expectations.

3.3.3 Exposing the Male Charade

In this poem it is the men who are on display and being scrutinized by a female observer. Judith Butler considers gender a 'corporeal style' or an 'act' which is both intentional and performative, meaning it is a fusion of psyche and appearance (Butler 2007: 190; 1993: 24). Gender identity becomes something constructed by expectations found in society, an ideal that one tries to attain within oneself by adapting one's appearance and bodily gestures. But,

as explained in the introduction, this ideal is never completely attainable, thus its imitators are always seen as never quite inhabiting the ideal they are ‘compelled to approximate’ (Butler 1993: 22). In Montagu’s parody of Swift’s poem it is no longer the female body that is under scrutiny for not managing to live up to an ideal, but the male. Despite his ecclesiastical rank, the Doctor is perceived as primarily physical. Behavioural observations made on Dr Swift become the starting point from which the speaker digresses into ‘Swiftian moral philosophy’ halfway into the poem (Grundy 1999: 343). The speaker, who has previously occupied the role of the seemingly objective observer, suddenly comes forward with a voice of her own: ‘But now this is the proper place | Where morals Stare me in the Face | And for the sake of fine Expression | I’m forc’d to make a small digression’ (Montagu 31-34). Having come upon a subject that needs further investigation, the speaker digresses from the original story of Doctor Swift’s visit to Betty to venture into social commentary and observation. This particular section stands out because of its shift in critical focus: not only does it support the previous critique of the Doctor’s pretensions but it opens up to include men in general. Reversing the satiric tradition of accusing women of deliberately creating illusions, it ingeniously debunks the social performance of men by presenting male stereotypes found in society.

Starting with a general observation: ‘Alas for wretched humankind | With learning mad, with wisdom blind!’ (Montagu 35-36), the speaker quickly turns the spotlight on the male sex in particular. Using the ‘Horatian commonplace’ about ‘the human tendency to mistake one’s own talents’ as her moral background (Grundy 2006: 192), she starts out by observing: ‘The stutterer fancys his is speaking’ (Montagu 40). According to Montagu’s speaker, there are several such male posers to be found in society that try to adhere to a masculine ideal by styling their bodies and putting on an act. ‘With Admiration oft we see’, she exclaims, ‘Hard Features heighten’d by Tupée’ (Montagu 41-42). She continues by describing the lover who presents himself as a politician, and the citizen who has ambitious ideas about his own wit. Clearly it is not just women who try to present a retouched version of themselves in public. Among these examples of male posers who strive to keep up a false public persona, it is only one who is identified by name: Alexander Pope. ‘Poor Pope Philosophy displays on | With so much Rhime and little reason, | And thô he argues ne’er so long | That, all is right, his Head is wrong’ (Montagu 45-48). The last line is actually a parody of Pope’s *Essay on Man* that was published just before the release of Montagu’s answer, Pope’s original line being ‘One truth is clear: Whatever IS, is RIGHT’ (Greenblatt 2594n;

Pope 2006: 2547. 294). When talking about men who have wrongly interpreted their potential in life, it must have been impossible for Montagu to resist throwing a punch in the direction of her literary foe Alexander Pope. ‘None strive to know their proper merit’, the speaker continues, ‘But strain for Wisdom, Beauty, Spirit’. Instead of accepting their natural physical appearance and public position, they all try desperately to present what they are not and while striving for the impossible they ‘lose the praise that is their due’ (Montagu 49-50, 51). The masculine performers basically end up bringing ridicule upon themselves. The speaker’s reasoning continues by drawing parallels to nature: ‘Instinct the Hound does better teach | Who never undertook to preach, | The frightened Hare from Dogs does run | But not attempts to bear a Gun’ (Montagu 55-58). A dog and a hare simply follow their natural instinct, surely, the speaker suggests, humanity should follow their example and stop struggling against nature to present themselves as something they are not.

Finding the necessary Swiftian moral part of the satire satisfactorily concluded ‘in the very manner used by Swift in his own poetry’ (Grundy 2006: 192); Montagu’s speaker is ready to return to the main storyline. Informing her readers that she could have continued on the subject of male performance, the speaker decides to spare them any further moral instruction because she herself finds excessive use of words boring: ‘Here many Noble thoughts occur | But I prolixity abhor, | And will pursue th’ instructive Tale | To shew the Wise in some things fail’ (Montagu 59-62). Remembering that Swift’s poem is 45 lines longer than Montagu’s and has a far more instructive tone, this line reads as a cleverly concealed criticism of Swift’s style of writing. Instead Montagu’s speaker goes on with her instructive tale in order to further enlighten her audience on the poem’s real subject: the reason why Dr Swift would write a poem called ‘The Lady’s Dressing Room’.

3.3.4 Betty: Free From the Constraints of Femininity

Even though Montagu’s answer to Swift’s ‘The Lady’s Dressing Room’ mimics its style, it does not, however, use the same names but substitutes vulgar names for Swift’s mock-pastoral ones. The female love interest in Montagu’s poem is not Strephon’s ‘haughty Celia’ but Doctor Swift’s ‘dearest Betty’. Betty, we understand, is a prostitute who sells her body to men for the right amount of coins. One might find it surprising that Montagu would choose a prostitute to play the heroine in her poem of female revenge. After all it was exactly ‘women as men’s sexual partners’ that formed the largest category of satires on women at the time

(McCreery 39), but this could have been precisely why Montagu chose her leading lady in the first place. Kathryn R. King observes in her article 'The Construction of Femininity':

At a time when many women poets sought to assert the authority of their own perceptions and to create in their writing a space independent of male assessment and the demands of male desire, it is to be expected that their poems would in various ways ironize the trope of woman as object of scrutiny and appraisal (King: 436).

Instead of joining the previous defenders of the female sex by insisting on women's superior virtue and morals, Montagu continues the tradition of casting the woman in the role of the accessory to masculine desire but turns it to highly original use. This time the female sexual object is given both a voice of her own and ample opportunity to answer back.

In the beginning of the eighteenth century, the writer Bernhard de Mandeville had this to say on the subject of prostitution: 'How is it to be suppos'd that honest women should walk the streets unmolested, if there were no harlots to be had at reasonable prices? [...] there is a necessity of sacrificing one art of womankind to preserve the other' (quoted in Hill 39). But at the time of the publication of Montagu's poem English society began to experience a 'growing concern about prostitutes as a social threat'. What had previously been tolerated as an unfortunate necessary evil was now being linked to moral corruption and physical decay as prostitution went hand in hand with venereal disease. Still, the old attitude towards the lady of pleasure as a natural female profession remained in the cultural consciousness. This created a double image of prostitutes as being both 'cheerful independent agents' and 'innocent victims' (McCreery 40). The character of Betty clearly belongs to the primary category. First of all, she is no ordinary streetwalker; her price of four pounds would have been a lot of money in the eighteenth century, so much in fact that it is possible she represents a 'demimonde' or a kept mistress. She is not intimidated by a man of Doctor Swift's stature, which further indicates that her clientèle consists of important people, and she keeps a maid. Secondly, she is a shrewd businesswoman, running her business without compromising and when she receives the desired amount of money from the Doctor she locks it in a trunk because she is 'Too wise to trust it in her pocket' (Montagu 28). Finally, she knows the game and performs her part beautifully. This includes being capable of blushing with grace like 'a gently reared virgin' whenever the occasion calls for it (Grundy 1999: 343). In a society where women were generally excluded from the professional world, prostitution was one of the few independent occupations open to women. Montagu needed an autonomous woman

who could wield power over important men; during the eighteenth century a prostitute was one of the few available choices.

In addition to making her a representative of an independent woman in the eighteenth century, Montagu manages to free Betty from many of the social restraints that followed womanhood at the time through giving her the status of a whore. The standard way of dividing the female sex into separate categories of angel and whore became even more intellectually institutionalized in the eighteenth century than if had been in earlier times. Operating with such polar opposites, it made the idea of a woman embodying both spirituality and sexuality logically impossible, as 'the very existence of desire' was seen as a 'transgression of the laws of gender' (Pollak 2). Any woman that would claim desire as an attribute would simultaneously invade what was seen as a male prerogative, making her an immediate deviant of gender. A prostitute's currency is desire, which automatically made her an unnatural woman and 'free from inhibitions of femininity' (Grundy 2006: 192). In fact, freeing her protagonist, Montagu also frees herself as an author writing about women. When choosing a prostitute as her leading lady, Montagu instantly lowers the expectations to Betty's behaviour and gets away with more than she normally would when creating a female character. Betty has the freedom of holding her own in a confrontation with a male authority as she is already seen as being outside of social convention. When the Doctor, fuelled by his sexual frustration, tries to lay the blame on Betty and her allegedly 'stinking' toes for his own disappointing performance, she has no scruples about giving back as good as she gets: 'The nymph grown Furious roar'd by God | The blame lies all in Sixty odd, | And scornful pointing to the door | Cry'd, Fumbler, see my Face no more' (Montagu 74-77). Instead of continuing her feminine performance from earlier in the evening, Betty throws all her conventional femininity, her smiling and her blushing, aside and fiercely fights back. She is not going to take this insult lying down, nor does she have to. When the Doctor has the nerve to demand his money back, Betty refuses: 'How, cry'd she, | Would you palm such a cheat on me! | For poor 4 pound to roar and bellow, | Why sure you want some new Prunella?' (Montagu 80-83). Her first thought is that he wants to take his business elsewhere and find another prostitute. The thought of losing money to the competition is not an appealing idea for the proud woman, so she stands up for herself and keeps the money. It is Betty that is given the last say in the poem. Hearing the Doctor threaten to sully her professional reputation, she answers him tongue-in-cheek: 'I'm glad you'll write, | You'll furnish paper when I shite' (Montagu 88-89). The story ends with this unrepentant and unflinching reference to 'the very bodily function

which had so appalled Swift's Strephon' (Grundy 2006: 192). Able to defend herself in true Swiftian style, Montagu's female character not only shits, like the notorious Celia, but has no problem admitting to it as she takes her revenge on the devious Doctor by threatening to use his poem as toilet paper.

One tends to agree with Robert Halsband when he points out that it 'may seem paradoxical to attack a writer for coarseness and obscenity by using terms as coarse and obscene', but 'perhaps', he continues: 'she believed in fighting fire with fire' (Halsband 1970: 228). After all it is not Swift's exposure of the female bodily functions that she seems to be reacting to, as her leading lady makes no apology for her own excremental nature. In fact, just like Swift did before her, Montagu seems to be delighting in destroying illusions, female as well as male. Similar to Swift, Montagu was no stranger to controversy. According to Isobel Grundy, she 'cracked jokes about forbidden subjects and chose or wore her clothes in a manner to give offence' (Grundy 1999: 300). Horace Walpole describes her appearance in a letter to a friend in 1740 thus:

Her dress, her avarice, and her impudence must amaze anyone that never heard her name. She wears a foul mob, that does not cover her greasy black locks, that hang loose, never combed or curled; and old mazarine blue wrapper, that gapes open and discovers a canvas petticoat (Walpole volume 37: 78).

Another story, told by Pope, tells of her wearing a black full-bottomed wig on the day of her departure from London to Constantinople, which was an 'exclusive male item of dress' (Grundy 1999: 117). It is worth taking into consideration that both stories featured here were told by men who had personal reasons for disliking her, thus causing doubt of the stories' accuracy and even truthfulness. Even so, it is reasonably safe to assume that Montagu must have engaged in her fair share of gender deviant behaviour in order to inspire this kind of gossip.

Later in life, while in exile, she told an English traveller called Francis Hutchinson about her grudge against Pope, Swift, and Bolingbroke. Showing him her close stool, which apparently had a 'false back of books' consisting of those authors' works, she told him it gave her 'the satisfaction of shitting on them every day'. This sudden association with her fictional character Betty must have been not only evident, but also highly amusing to her (Grundy 1999: 566-567). Needless to say, this is not the image of a woman who censors herself for the sake of social decency. Her willingness to enter into the vulgar Swiftian universe can be seen

as part of a strategy of resistance, in which she exposes traditional gender clichés as being unrealistic and ineffective in order to undermine existing gender presumptions. In her poem, Montagu not only continues to keep the ‘filthy’ female biology out in the open, but also showcases how the man’s body falls short of the cultural ideal. The end result is that neither of her two main characters performs his or her gender in a socially accepted manner.

3.4 Defying Social Taboos

Butler argues that the appearance of a human body, rather than being ‘predetermined by some manner of interior essence,’ is instead ‘a set of possibilities’. What eventually determines a body’s ‘concrete expression in the world’ is ‘the taking up and rendering specific of a set of historical possibilities’ (Butler 2003: 99). Some of these historical possibilities, as previously discussed in the introduction, are left behind as societies develop and grow, while others are handed down through generations with the help of tradition. What has always been a part of the traditional norms that constitute the western social understanding of the difference between a feminine and a masculine identity is the idea that the feminine body produces less natural waste than the male. Obviously not grounded in biology, this gender norm has become part of what is perceived as femininity. If a woman wants to be perceived as a feminine subject by her society, she has to adhere to historical traditions and cover up certain biological facts when in public. Whenever such a gendered taboo is revealed as not originating from actual nature, the conventional view of what is considered the truth about gender becomes destabilized and exposed as a ‘changeable and revisable reality’ (Butler 2007: xxiv). The social reaction to such exposure will always be shock or denial as it questions that which is considered an accepted truth about gender. One of the main things that becomes obvious when reading ‘The Lady’s Dressing Room’ and ‘The Reasons that Induced Dr S[wift] to Write a Poem Call’d The Lady’s Dressing Room’ together is that, though seemingly opposite in their focus, they can be read as two sides of the same coin. They both take advantage of the rigid eighteenth century gender ideals in their poems in order to create the desired effect: breaching cultural taboos in order to shock. When something is taboo it is inhibited by social customs that are part of a specific culture. Butler describes gender identity as exactly that: ‘a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo’ (Butler 2003: 98). According to Swift in his *Tale of the Tub*, ‘one of the greatest, and best of human Actions’ is ‘to remove Prejudices, and place Things in their truest and fairest Light’ (Swift 1939: 101). Though one might argue that his literary depiction of Celia is not particularly fair to women

in general, as there is no denying that she is especially slovenly, he never the less remains true to his ideals of exposing unrealistic expectations. This 'desire to correct contemporary illusions' (Woodman 109) pushes him into deconstructing Celia's public femininity so to debunk the social and literary illusion that women are raised above the biological human condition. Montagu points out the absurdity of living under such social illusions in a letter to her sister Lady Mar. In it she tells the story of a young Duke of Bedford who, 'by the care of a pious Mother certainly preserv'd his Virginity to his marriage bed', was so disappointed in learning the biological truth about his bride that he 'already Pukes at the very name of her'. So disgusted was he that he would rather have his estate go to his brother than 'go through the filthy Drudgery of getting an Heir to it'. Montagu ends the story, which she swears is true, by stating: 'I think the most extraordinary [sic] has happen'd in this last age. This comes of [boys] living till sixteen without a competent knowledge either of practical or speculative Anatomy, and litterally [sic] thinking fine Ladys compos'd of Lillys and Roses' (Montagu 1966: 55-56). It seems like the two literary adversaries had something in common: they both found the gender ideals of their time in need of adjustment.

The idea of gender being controlled by social taboo and historical possibilities is linked to the concept of social repercussions should a member of the society fail to conform. In both poems there is a certain amount of social punishment involved when the characters perform their expected gender identity in the wrong way in the eyes of their society. Poor Celia had to 'deck herself out so ornately to satisfy the expectations of a Strephon' (Greene 679-680) only to find herself rejected when proven faulty. But there are two victims of social pretence and illusion in 'The Lady's Dressing Room': the disillusioned Strephon and the deconstructed Celia. Neither of them manages to keep his or her gender status in the eyes of their readers as they both lose abilities that are seen as prerequisites to maintaining their gender identities in their society: Strephon loses his desire for women and Celia loses her ability to attract men. In 'The Reasons That Induced Dr S[wift] to Write a Poem Call'd The Lady's Dressing Room' the Doctor is humiliated in the eyes of the readers because of his loss of sexual ability. The female character of Betty, as previously mentioned, by inhabiting the role of the unvirtuous woman or the prostitute, has already been given the social punishment in the poem by being outside of society from the start. Butler sees the fact that a culture 'so readily punishes or marginalizes those who fail to perform the illusion of gender essentialism' as a clear sign that there is on some level a social knowledge that acknowledges 'the truth or falsity of gender' as being 'only socially compelled and in no sense ontologically

necessitated' (Butler 2003: 107). It is indeed interesting to observe how the punishments exercised in both poems are gender specific. Celia's offence is that she is a female that is discovered to be dirty and Strephon's offense is that he is a male who is exposed as being fragile. The Doctor is a man who cannot perform sexually and Betty is a woman who sexually performs too much. All of these particular offenses are seen as shocking simply because they go against the eighteenth century society gender conventions.

Being allowed to embody a masculine or feminine identity is dependent on your ability to inhabit the character given to you by society. When someone exposes cultural gender expectations as being faulty he or she will get reactions as this destabilizes social reality. This is clearly demonstrated by the controversy that greeted Swift's 'The Lady's Dressing Room'. It could not have been news to Swift's contemporaries that women sometimes dirty their clothes, spit in a sink, or even go to the bathroom. The shocking part was that Swift dared to write so directly and explicitly about it. As for Montagu, she used a gender deviant heroin in order to utilise the taboo of masculine impotence and to give her character a strong voice. It is this obvious awareness of the subversive possibilities provided by the strict categories of gender that eventually unites the two poems and makes them stand out from the crowd of eighteenth century satirists engaged in writing for or against the female sex.

4. Conclusion

The eighteenth century was a particularly gender conscious time in English history. The social structure rested on the image of the male and the female as naturally opposite in everything from the physical to the psychological. This distinction was presented as so considerable that it made sense to separate their social position and treatment completely. These normative ideas of gender functioned as a way to control society, but also formed the basis of such cultural gender myths as ‘the myth of passive womanhood’ and the deplorable female images present in the satire against women tradition. However, a society is always changing and so is the relationship between the genders. Even if the cultural discourse in the eighteenth century described the difference between the genders as being essential to their identities, these categories were not presented as entirely fixed. The traditional male and female categories were increasingly questioned during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Gender ideals seem to have been up for renegotiation. As Margaret Doody observes, the properties of gender in the eighteenth century seemed to be more ‘flickering’ than completely stable (Doody 58). Women writers expressed a growing scepticism towards traditional images of females in society. Female reality was contrasted with the female ideal that had long governed the conventional discourse framework of conceptualizing women and, as we have seen in the discussion of this thesis, it was clear that the gap was enormous. Appropriate to this image of an unstable gender system, Judith Butler’s theory of performativity seeks to destabilize the gender structure in society through presenting it as a system of cultural norms. Her idea of a self receiving the status of subject only by conforming to these norms is linked to the notion of a negotiation process. Because the subjects never truly inhabit the ideal they are compelled to resemble, everyone is always forced to negotiate their gendered appearance in society. This continuing resignification of the norms is, according to Butler, the evidence for their inefficiency and lack of natural origin (Butler 1993: 26). What this thesis proposed to do was to discuss two poems by male writers, ‘An Elegy to a Young Lady in the Manner of Ovid’ by James Hammond and ‘The Lady’s Dressing Room’ by Jonathan Swift, in relation to the answers they received by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: ‘An Answer to the Foregoing Elegy’ and ‘The Reasons that Induced Dr S[wift] to Write a Poem Call’d a Lady’s Dressing Room’. Using Butler’s theory as my theoretical background, I wanted to focus on the four poem’s relationship to gender in order to place them within the eighteenth century context of gender renegotiation.

One of my first claims in this thesis is that the four poems presented here, when read as two companion pieces, offer a unique look into gender discourse. The main reason for this is the subversive gender discourse found in Montagu's answers. I have on several occasions pointed out how Montagu in her answers is reworking the presentation of gender found in the poems written by men. She opposes the image of woman as object by giving voice to two female recipients of male desire. Her answer to Hammond gives the previously silent feminine presence in his text a chance to speak, while the prostitute Betty, the heroine in her answer to Swift, not only claims the right to speak but gets the final say. By adding this female perspective, she manages to revise literary genres originally constructed by and for male experience and makes them work in her favour. The fact that she, being a woman, was not supposed to enter into such literary dialogues as the ones presented here further strengthens the effect of her satires. Montagu can be seen as actively trying to 'lay claim to the power to name [herself]' (Butler 1993: 19). Writing about women as a woman, Montagu is demanding the right to determine the literary referential frames available for constricting her own sex. This participation in the cultural discourse of gender renegotiation forms the basis for both her claim to feminism and my understanding of her texts as subversive.

The gendered self is policed by the existence of social taboo, prohibition and threats of punishment. Even if Montagu is seen as being active in describing the inefficiency of women's social status in both her answers in this thesis, she is nevertheless presented as being conscious of the seriousness of the regulatory framework that constitutes her female reality. Should a member of society fail to conform to the existing historical standards of their ascribed gender identity there is real social punishment awaiting the offender. The fact that these historical standards of gender are forever changing is a result of a continued renegotiation of the regulatory norms. In all four poems there is evidence of an ongoing process of questioning and reworking the limits of masculinity and femininity. Montagu's dialogue with Hammond shows how the popular literature at the time often continued to support the traditional discourse available for describing women. Hammond makes use of several female stereotypes in his poem, including the dangerous woman and the prude, who both, in different ways, are described as using their sexuality to have power over men. These stereotypes are used as cautionary examples in order to manipulate the female recipient of his love elegy. In addition to giving the female object of desire in Hammond's poem a voice, Montagu's answer exposes his female images as being socially unavoidable because of the compulsory feminine ideals that existed in society. Societies are understood to produce that

which they deny; the same rigid frames that label gender deviants unnatural manufacture them by presenting what they are not as being natural. The natural for a woman was to belong to a man; anything else was seen as unnatural. Montagu especially presents the female ideal of passivity as being inadequate and not conducive to happy human relationships. The notion of virtue and honour is only supported to the extent that she recognises the reality of the social repercussions that would follow a transgression of the norms. Her willingness to hint at the possibility of another outcome is evidence of the fact that she experiences these gender norms as inefficient and in need of negotiation.

What is particularly interesting in her exchange with Swift is that they both seem to be aware of the subversive possibilities that lie in the strict categories of gender found in their society. As in her dialogue with Hammond, the idea of social punishment for gender violation is an important factor. In Swift's poem, the gap between female and male diminishes when Celia is exposed in the light of her biological truth, which puts his protagonist Strephon and the eighteenth century gender ideals into a crisis. Swift uses the female body as a way of exposing how continuing to present such traditional gender ideals in literature might be damaging to actual human relationships. The image of the female presented in much literature at the time created a feminine ideal so exalted that young men might find it difficult to accept the truth about female biology. Montagu's answer does not seem to be a reaction to Swift's aim of destroying these gender ideals, as her answer only confirms his disclosure of women's excremental functions, but she provides a reversal of perspective. Her satiric focus is not on how women do not measure up to the existing ideal, but exposes men as failing the same task. Instead of mirroring the traditional defence of womankind by insisting on their moral superiority, Montagu borrows from the male tradition and casts her female protagonist in the role of the object of male desire, but manages to make it work in her favour by making sure Betty has a powerful voice and ample opportunity to use it. Reducing Swift's male identity by presenting his fictional sexual performance as lacking, Montagu manages to reduce not only the impact of Swift's deplorable female images but also his right to criticise them.

I have tried throughout my discussion to focus on how Montagu's poetical answers can be described as subversive acts when using Judith Butler's definition of subversive as '*working the weakness in the norm*'. A subversive act, according to Butler, is not only an act that exposes the performative nature of gender but one that also inhabits 'the practices of its rearticulation' (Butler 1993: 26, emphasis in the original). Understood by the growing public

gender dialogue in the eighteenth century, the male and female ideals present in the cultural discourse were increasingly experienced as inefficient. Verse in general – and especially satire – was one of the big arenas for the debates on gender. The presence of several contradictory images of women both in literature and in society in general produced a power struggle between the genders as female writers fought for the right to name themselves and to be able to, as Butler describes it, ‘determine the conditions under which that name [was] used’ (Butler 1993: 19). Montagu’s position within eighteenth century literary culture, having access to the most influential group of writers, gave her the opportunity to be part of and to contribute to the otherwise restrictively masculine Augustan world. Whether or not Montagu participated in the actual publishing of her work, her continuous production and distribution of texts make her authorship a public act and she an active part of the public gender dialogue.

Montagu’s awareness of gender roles, together with her progressive use of them to create effect in her answers, is extraordinary, but, no matter how much she seems to be conscious of the normative construction of gender, Montagu herself writes from an ascribed social role and is inescapably part of and subjectified by the very culture she is criticising. The fact that she to a certain extent acknowledges the necessity of such social roles through her recognition of female reality is further proof of her understanding of herself as a member of her society. As Judith Butler observes, the process of self-naming is ‘paradoxically contested by the historicity of the name itself’ (Butler 1993: 19). The culture produces the language, so any negotiation will always happen from the inside of the regulatory frames of already existing gender discourse. But, even though it is impossible for a subject to exist at a distance from the culture that names them, a writer retains some elements of individual choice in so far as she or he can decide what kind of relationship they assume to the social structure. Women writers in the eighteenth century were working within ‘genres and poetic conventions created and shaped by men’, but they were nonetheless writing from the position of a woman (Backscheider 2005a: 19). How they imagine and represent themselves, other women, and gender relationships offers a re-viewed interpretation of their male counterparts’ perspective.

In the case of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, her relationship to her surrounding structure cannot be seen as anything less than subversive when we think about her continuous effort to counteract the negative female stereotypes present in the literature written by men. Even when Montagu affirms the truth of gender norms in her writing she nonetheless engages in a subversive practice by revealing these norms as being open for renegotiation. Her own

life demonstrates this ambiguous relationship to her society, as many of her own personal choices are in stark contrast to her insistence on the need to avoid social punishment. From marrying against her father's wishes to engaging the most famous satirist in satirical battle and eventually moving abroad in pursuit of a younger man, she was continuously defiant of social expectations throughout her life. Her willingness to enter into the often vulgar universe of satire can be seen as an extension of this attitude of resistance towards the gender norms she herself found to be inefficient and limiting. This undermining of existing gender presumptions by actively participating in the main arena of rearticulation should be seen as an inspiration for the modern women of today to continue to question and challenge the public gender dialogue. As Judith Butler writes: 'It remains politically necessary to lay claim to "women," "queer," "gay," and "lesbian," precisely because of the way these terms, as it were, lay their claim on us prior to our full knowing' (Butler 1993: 20). Apparent from the discussion presented in this thesis, Montagu's relationship with her male associates was part of a greater gender renegotiation that went on at the time. But even if this was a specific time in history it does not mean that the negotiation period has ended, as I see it, gender renegotiation should always be part of a conducting and developing cultural discourse.

As I mentioned in the introduction, the discussion presented in this thesis only investigates a small part of a much larger field of study: literary exchanges as a phenomenon in the eighteenth century. The idea that these exchanges turn conversation into an art form is truly an interesting notion, especially when one considers the wide range of topics discussed in this way. Violent arguments were fought, slander spread, and new issues raised. Knowing that the women who participated in this tradition, most of them anonymous, not only expressed their opinion in a way that went against the social norms of their sex, but showed off their wit in an arena dominated by men, makes their participation in this field especially worth investigating further. More research should be made into the phenomenon of literary exchanges of the type discussed in this thesis, which was such a prominent feature of eighteenth century poetry.

Finally, going back to my opening quote, in which Montagu claims that 'it is necessary to respect, even conform to public foolishness' (Montagu 1993: 392), it seems appropriate to add an observation to this enlightened (perhaps immoral, but true) statement. As becomes clear after reading her texts: even if one can never escape the norms of one's society, there is never the less always a possibility to call for a renegotiation of terms.

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